

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012-2013) OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

46TH Sitting

Tuesday, 9TH April, 2013

Assembly convened at 2.11 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: Good afternoon everyone.

Ambulance in the Compound

The announcements are: first, some of you or most of you would have noticed an ambulance in the compound. It is nothing to be exceptionally alarmed about. It is just as a precaution and in keeping with the undertaking given by the Parliament Office to have every facility available. There was a stretcher in the foyer, which I have asked to be removed because think we can be tending a bit too far. So, the stretcher would go back to the ambulance and, hopefully, will not be used. It was only for demonstration purposes, not to be used.

Letter of Resignation from Mr. Richard Allen

On a more serious note, Hon. Members, this morning I received a letter from Mr. Richard Allen, informing me that he was resigning his seat as a Member of Parliament with effect from the 5th

April, 2013. Mr. Allen's resignation therefore means that his seat in this National Assembly has become vacant.

The vacancy is in accordance with Section 99 A. of the Representation of the People Act, Chapter 1:03 of the Laws of Guyana and is to be filled by a person whose name is to be extracted from the list of candidates from which Mr. Allen's name was originally extracted. As Mr. Allen's name was extracted from A Partnership of National Unity's list of candidates, I have, in accordance with Section 99 A. of the said Act, called upon the representatives of that said list to further extract from that list the name of a person who is willing to become a Member of this National Assembly to fill the vacancy in the Assembly.

Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The following Bill was introduced and read for the first time:

FISCAL ENACTMENTS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2013 – Bill No. 11/2013

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Income Tax Act and the Property Tax Act.” *[Minister of Finance]*

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2013 – MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2013

“WHEREAS the Constitution of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for any financial year should be laid before the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution also provides that when the Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure;

AND WHEREAS Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2013 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2013-03-25;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2013 of a total sum of **one hundred and ninety four billion, three hundred and forty three million, seven hundred and sixty four thousand, eight hundred and seventy three dollars (\$194,343,764,873), excluding fourteen billion, and four hundred and ninety six million, six hundred and seventy nine thousand one hundred and twenty seven dollars (\$14,496,679,127)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Assembly resumed budget debate.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now resume the debate on the Budget for the year 2013. This being the last day that we have set aside for this debate, the first speaker for today will be the Government’s Chief Whip, Ms. Gail Teixeira.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. On our side, we have talked about living the Guyana dream and we have heard a number of speakers scoff at this and make fun of dreams and hopes. From time immemorial, human beings have had dreams, hopes and aspirations, always based on the greatest goals of human dignity. I guess this is what makes us different from animals; it is that we always strive for the best, for excellence, and we are driven by conscience and conscientiousness in terms of achieving the best that mankind and womankind can do.

The records of history are replete with visionaries who have been scoffed at, some burnt at the stake, some assassinated. The dreams of Leonardo Da Vinci with the flying machines of the 15th century became a reality in the 20th century. More dreams, of Martin Luther King Jnr. - “I have a

dream.” Has that dream been attained that Martin Luther King talked about? Yet people still dream of its realisation. Martin Luther King said that it was 100 years since the abolition of slavery and still Afro-Americans were treated as second class citizens. Martin Luther King was a man, a wise leader, a statesman, who warned. He warned. He said, “Even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream.” Dreams are based on the hopes and aspirations of all.

Martin Carter wrote in the *University of Hunger*, “O long is the march of men, and long is the life and wide is the span.” He recognised, like Martin Luther King and so many others before him, that it is a constant struggle that men and women wage to be able to achieve our dreams. If one were to talk to every single Guyanese man, woman and child about what their dreams are as individuals, they would say that they want to go to university, to be a businessman, to own a home, to find a good man, to find a good woman; these are dreams. Some are realised and some are never realised. Hopes and dreams keep our spirit alive and keep us struggling.

Before 1992 when we were dreaming and struggling for a time when there would be free and fair elections and we worked towards the restoration of democracy, those dreams were scoffed at too. I remember a journalist interviewing Dr. Cheddi Jagan on the eve of the 1992 Elections and saying to him, “Dr. Jagan, why do you want to lead Guyana now? It is a collapsed state. It has nowhere to go.” Dr. Jagan talked about it being the PPP that would bring Guyana out of the depths of inequity and deprivation that it was in 1992.

I am not one of the youthful Members of this Parliament, but I do have a long memory. I have grown up in the 1960s with the dream of hydro-power. I have grown up hearing about the hydro potential of our country. This dream has been around with us from the 1950s and 1960s. Today, this dream is closer to reality than ever before with the Amaila Falls.

I am old enough to have known when there was the Atkinson Airport and when the development of the present airport that we have was done. We talk now about a brand new airport. I hear the naysayers on the other side saying, “Why do you not wait on the planes to come and then build a new airport?” It is the chicken and the egg story. If there is no runway and no capacity, no aeroplanes will come. So, it is always the chicken and the egg story. Where do we start? We

have to start with a leap of faith that what we are doing is in the best interest of our people and our country.

The Opposition has given arguments on hydro and the airport and they are contradicting each other. I just want to say that I was in Grenada on the eve of the invasion of Grenada when Prime Minister Maurice Bishop was running the county. I saw the Cubans building the brand new airport in Grenada. Grenada, before, had a tiny airport that was actually quite dangerous to fly into in those days. There was this huge land being cleared, and Cubans and Grenadians and other volunteers came from all over the world to make this happen. It was the building of that new airport which would have opened Grenada for tourism and economic activity that was unimaginable, which contributed to the invasion of that country by a foreign power.

The last international hotel we had in this country was Pegasus, which is now locally owned. Yet, I have heard all sorts of comments about a new international hotel. Is it not time, after all this period that we are able to rise above nitpicking and, at least, say, "Look, here is a vision. These are the things we need to do as a country, and let us see how to make it better. If there are problems, let us see how to make it better, " not just go around and smash things down and talk about rejecting and cutting. Cut, cut, cut; scissors and axes are all we are hearing about!

What is the Guyana dream? How do we dare to dream of what we want in our country in this century and the next? Do we not dare to dream? Do we not dare to imagine what this country could be? We have talked forever. Walter Raleigh and all them came, found here and found Eldorado, and recognised in a time of a world where this was just bush and mud, that this was a country that had potential, and they exploited it.

We struggled for the dream of our people to abolish slavery, for emancipation, for freedom. In 1763 - which is the 250th anniversary this year - was a dream of people to be free and not be shackled anymore by slavery and racism. Then we had the indentured labourers who came here and struggled also to end Indentureship, another form of bondage. Then we struggled for independence, for our freedom as a nation to put our flag up and to be called a nation, Guyana - not British Guiana, but Guyana.

Our struggle for democracy, for free and fair elections, came to pass. All these dreams took a long time. These were not dreams that happened overnight, but what sustained people was the belief that it would happen and that they could do it. It is so today.

When, in 1992, we took over this country, the reconstruction of a collapsed country... Twenty years ago, a failed state was not talked about, but Guyana was a basket case and a failed state in 1992.

If, in 1964, when Guyana was the third highest ranking country in the Caribbean, we had been able to continue running this country as the People's Progressive Party, we would be so far away - quantum leaps away - from what we are today. We had to start all over again and we had to rebuild. If you think it was an easy road, it was not an easy road.

We, as a people, as a Government, as an Opposition, as civil society, as communities, have struggled and abided and have been resilient and consistent, and we have made mistakes and we have made gains, but we have learnt, as we have traversed these 21 years.

It is an emerging democracy, an emerging developing country that has achieved much. The Hon. Deborah Backer said that I missed the boat, but I want to just say to my Comrade on the other side that I may have missed the boat, but the boat I am supporting knows exactly where it is going. I must parry; the canoe or ballahoo over that side seems to have too many paddlers who do not seem to be paddling in the same direction. They are going round and round. They better watch out; they are going to overturn. At least I know that my boat is on a steady course!

We are challenged in many ways, and the Budget makes it clear that we have to overcome our challenges together and we have to accelerate the gains. We have seen countries that have made great gains. When there is political instability or a political climate that is fraught with problems, how fragile that growth is, how fragile those economic gains are and how easy it can be reversed... We must take seriously this discussion and debate on the 2013 Budget. This is a do-and-die issue for all of us in this House. We are not playing children's games; we are not playing hopscotch; we are not playing jacks. We are playing with a nation's development and its future and we have to recognise that.

We are challenged much as any developing country. Global warming – where we are in a country which coastland is seven to nine feet below the sea... We will always have to pump money into drainage and irrigation. I heard one of the speakers yesterday talk about \$7 billion going into Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) and it not being effectively used. If it is not being effectively used, let us see how we can make it do better. But we do not want to go back to the days when there was no money going into D&I and when the canals and kokers were closed in this country. During the 2005 flood, a whole set of kokers could never be opened because they were closed in the 1970s. Someone thought that being seven to nine feet below the sea meant nothing.

Mr. Speaker, we admit the global economic financial unpredictability which is around us and that will impact on us a primary producing country.

We recognise that internally we have our own issues, our own challenges of 788,000 people. No matter which way you cut it, we do not have enough people for the tasks and jobs we have to do today. We do not have enough bodies. Therefore, we must embrace other people, other skills, to come in and work with us to build our nation. We have always had a friendly immigration policy and we will continue to have that, because we want to take the best of the world.

I have heard speakers talk about emigration and how people are leaving here in boat loads or plane loads. The International Organization of Migration figures between 1959 and 2004, and this is the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), had put out figures for Guyana and other countries. It took immigration data from the recipient countries. Just for your own information, between 1974 and 2004, 87,993 Guyanese left this country as permanent residents to Canada, the average being 6,000 odd persons per annum. From 1997 onwards, we have had a 55 per cent decline in the average migration to Canada from Guyana.

The United States, do you have any idea of how many people – I am only talking about legal people, obviously, not illegal people – between 1959 and 2004, 45 years, we lost legally to the United States? We lost 253,895. The highest recorded years were 1982, 1986, 1987, 1990 and 1991- the highest numbers of 10,000 per year to the United States. Between 1998 and 2000, the number of persons leaving this country declined also below 50 per cent. The average between

1979 and 1988 were 8,860 people. The decline between 1990 and 2004 was 15 per cent to 20 per cent below the years in the 1970s.

I believe that when we come to the National Assembly, it is nice for the tail to wag the dog, but we must also come here with some level of information to guide the National Assembly.

Is everything perfect? No. Have we conquered everything? No. Can we do things better? Yes. Can we improve? Yes. Who would come to this House, on this side of the House, and indicate that we are doing everything perfectly? But, progress is visible; progress is palpable. You can see it wherever you go. You cannot be like a donkey with blinders on, with tunnel vision, that you cannot see the progress taking place in this country. Why would we, as Guyanese, belittle what we have achieved? Why do we not point to where we want to go?

The pro-poor, pro-growth policy of this Government and its approach to national development started before the 1992 Elections when we were preparing and anticipating that under a free and fair election, the People's Progressive Party/Civic would win. We could have chosen to go on a direct capitalist path, fund the money into the economy, fund it into the private sector and we did not. We took a human, people oriented path to development. The concept of pro-poor, pro-growth was created and the pro-poor of the social safety nets et cetera.

In 1992, 67 per cent of the people were below the poverty line in this country. Yet, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, I remember as the Minister of Health, came to tell me, as the Minister Health, that we must have cost recovery in health. They went to the then Minister of Education, God rest his name, former Minister Dale Bisnauth, and told him to have cost recovery in education. This Government, this party, said, "No! No! No!" We made conscientious choices.

One has to make choices and judgements. There is nothing wrong with the Opposition saying that your choice was wrong and your judgement was wrong. That is not a problem. Show us how and show us where. The choices - health, education, water... Fifty-eight per cent of the people had access to water; now, almost 90 per cent of the people have access to water in this country. Housing – no low income houses were built for ten years. Dr. Cheddi Jagan sat down in 1993/1994 and said let us see what we could do about housing. When you went to the country side and when you went to Georgetown, right here in this city, you had 20 people living in the

same place with one latrine and one faucet. We forget? Or certain people are only living in certain parts of the city and do not remember it?

The Ministry of Housing and Water has not only provided shelter for our people, which is a human right, and water, which is human right. The right to education is a human right, and the right to health is a human right. It is the impact of these things which speakers before me have referred to - millennium development goals, universal primary education, moving to universal secondary education, gender parity in the primary schools and... Unlike in other countries where girls do not go to school, girls in this country are thriving and showing how well they can do. In fact, we have another problem. We have a problem that the boys are sliding behind, not the girls. These are social issues we have to confront, and they require an entire nation to solve them, not just a Government or an Opposition badgering.

If we tell the story of housing, it is a story that is a dream that has come true for individual people, but also what it did for the economy... When we started we were very naïve in a sense; we provided shelter for people. We never envisaged in 1993 that it would have the boom in the construction industry, or that it would create a shortage of skilled labour in the construction industry. We never envisaged the manufacturing that would come from it and the small businesses that would come from it beyond people having a decent place to live. We never envisaged that between 2006 to now, 50 per cent of the houses would have been given to single women or women by themselves with their own name and nobody else's on the title. If you men over on that side do not understand what that means to women, you are going to lose the women vote. Women are empowered in this country for the first time.

The path we chose was a slower path than if we had gone the straight capitalist model, gone the Hong Kong way, the Singapore way or the Asian Tiger way. We could have chosen that path and we did not. We chose a path which has consistently, over 21 budgets, held the position of pro-poor and pro-growth. We have not deviated from that despite Dr. Cheddi Jagan died, and we have had Mrs. Jagan as President and Dr. Jagdeo as President, and we have Mr. Ramotar, now, as President. We have not deviated philosophically or ideologically from that.

We have catered for the poor and vulnerable, not just the poor, but the vulnerable - women can be poor and they can be vulnerable - elderly, Amerindians, disabled, and children. The Budget

reflects this policy. The Budget does not make policy. The Budget is the means to the end, to take the policy and breathe life into it with one of the three things - men, money and machines. That is what the Budget is about, three things: men, meaning men and women, obviously, money and machines. The policy is there, pro-poor, pro-growth.

I have heard people on the other side say that the PPP/C is a minority, but I remind this House that until the day that one of these two parties on the other side can have the single largest bloc of votes, the PPP/C is here and it is here to stay. The PPP/C on this side stands for all the Guyanese. You do not hear us talking on this side about 'our constituency', unlike what we hear on that side, where you talk about the 160,000 people who voted for the two parties. It means that the rest of the people do not count when you say that. We are saying as PPP/C that we represent all the people!

We have heard comments about the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) and the Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL). What is the alternative? I heard the Hon. Member, Mr. Nagamootoo, last night, and I heard Mr. Greenidge speak about wastage and all these things. I was wondering, when I listened to both of them, more particularly Mr. Nagamootoo, what were the alternatives to GPL and GuySuCo. GPL provides an absolute, essential service to the Guyanese people.

Mr. Speaker, we tried privatising GPL and we ended up having to take it back and run it. We had to it. What is the alternative? How can we come to this House...? It may not be efficient and it may not be a number of things, but we have a master plan. There are plans and I am sure the Prime Minister will deal with this in greater detail.

GuySuCo is now, according to some of the speakers, this weight, this milestone, but no one complained about GuySuCo when the sugar levy was holding up this country for the 1980s and 1990s, when the sugar workers sugar levy kept this whole country going. It was the PPP/C who gave back the sugar levy.

There are many things I would like to quote from, the World Economic Forum 2012 Report on the Global Gender Analysis, which shows that we are way ahead of many other countries: the economic participation of women is ranked 94 of 135 countries; education attainment is at 28 of

135 countries, health and education is 47 of 135 countries, and political empowerment is 132 out of 135 countries. All of these things show that we are moving.

2.41 p.m.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Working Paper – WP/12/276 IMF – The Challenges of Fiscal Consolidation and Debt Reduction in the Caribbean, on page five, talks about the fiscal performance in the Caribbean during the last 15 years and talks about the fact that the debt accumulation to an average is 70 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the 2008 - 2011 period. This is for the Caribbean.

It goes on to state that:

“individual countries’ experiences show that most countries had the highest debt build-up in the first period, that is the earlier period, but aided by Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI), Guyana’s debt more than halved between 1997 and 2011.”

It also goes on to state on page 12 that “debt to GDP ratio has increased in all countries with the exception of Guyana and the magnitude ranges from as low as 3 per cent to as high as over 20 percentage points for GDP.” In fact, it continues to state that “in Guyana the debt decrease was strongly facilitated by high GDP growth rates. The high contribution of interest rates was not due to higher interest rates, as in other countries, as these decreased, on average, from 5.2 per cent to 4.6 per cent.” This document is on a website but if the House wishes to photocopy, I have no problems with that. It is a public document.

Issues have been raised about transparency and accountability. We have to talk about this. We have signed international treaties such as the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the six human rights treaties. We report to all of them and appear before all of them to be reviewed.

We have been reviewed by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and we are up to date. For the Rights of the Child, there is one more report that has to be sent in. For the other reports, we have submitted them to the Committee on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, et cetera.

On the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, which we have been a signatory to – and we sit on the MESICIC, which is the panel that reviews all countries and then we are reviewed by those countries – we are up to date in the third cycle, and, in this year, the fourth cycle will be started and that would include an on-site visit to Guyana. We are trying to abide with our international treaty obligations which, to me, are the international standards which we are trying to reach.

I am not particularly wooed by what Transparency International (TI) has to talk about us. It does not impress me because I sit on an expert panel on corruption in Latin America and the Caribbean which goes through and looks at laws, framework and processes and tries to make it so that every country improves.

If you think that the paragons of virtue are the United States of America and Canada, let me tell you that in Latin America and the Caribbean these countries have no laws that allow “facilitation payments” for foreign investments in a country. In Canada and the United States of America, there are laws that if a company comes and passes a bribe to anybody, it is not against the law. It is against the law in Guyana.

By the way, I heard someone comment about the fact that the Hon. Member, Dr. Ashni Singh, talked in the beginning of his speech about a resort to the Organization of American States (OAS), et cetera. We are a signatory to the OAS and to the Inter-American Democratic Charter. There are clauses in those charters which can be invoked to protect countries, not only to protect victims of human rights violations, which are under threat in terms of democracy. We have a right. We are not only on the receiving end. We can, also, as a country, go before the UN or the OAS and appeal for help. This is our right. This is not an issue that is debatable.

There are internal issues. Out of the constitutional reform and out of the parliamentary reform, there are some of the most progressive oversight mechanisms for the entire Caribbean and CARICOM and we should be proud of that. Certainly, we have to keep improving. Certainly, we have to make it work better.

When the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), under this so-called new dispensation, started working in October last year to review the 2010 and 2011 Reports... that is your problem; that is not my problem. When the Parliamentary Sectoral Committees were only appointed in February this year, whose problem was that? Whose fault was that?

The Hon. Member Dr. Rupert Roopnarine – I listened to him yesterday – raised a number of interesting issues. If he had sat on the Sectoral Committees, he would know that there was in-depth, profound discussions and the calling in of members of boards and companies and Ministers before them. This is how it worked up to September, 2011. *New brooms sweep clean...*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time has elapsed. Could someone move for an extension?

Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]: Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Hon. Member be given another 15 minutes to conclude her presentation.

Ms. Ally: No.

Mr. Hinds: How many?

Ms. Ally: It is five minutes.

Mr. Hinds: I ask that the Hon. Member be given five minutes to conclude.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, my understanding was that the Member, as the Chief Whip, would be given 15 minutes.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Government's Chief Whip is a backbencher and we agreed that backbenchers would speak for 25 minutes with a five-minute extension.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, on the first day when, in fact, Ms. Ally was absent, I was told that two Opposition backbenchers would be given frontbencher time. It was my understanding, as I proposed with Mrs. Backer, that the Chief Whip of the Government side would also be accorded some rights as were Mr. Felix and Mr. Bulkan. I believe that as I have given extra time to two Opposition backbenchers, Mr. Felix and Mr. Bulkan, given their portfolios, it was my understanding, as worked out with the acting Chief Whip at the time, that the Government's Chief Whip would have that time.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, the acting Chief Whip did not report that to me and in discussions with the Government's Chief Whip, it is an understanding that the Hon. Member is a backbencher and she has to speak for that time. [Mr. Neendkumar: What about Mr. Bulkan and Mr. Felix?] Mr. Bulkan and Mr. Felix are only sitting in those seats but they are shadow ministers. They are sitting in those seats because there is not enough space in the front bench.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I am entertaining the application from the Prime Minister for 15 minutes.

Mr. Hinds: That was my understanding, Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this debate. It was that the Chief Whip would have been granted a 15-minute extension.

Mr. Speaker: It was my understanding, as well, and I am asking that we extend it.

Question put, and agreed to.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, I am really amazed. The Chief Whip on the other side believes that after all of these years in politics, she can put me in my place. I am afraid that she cannot. Whether I sit at the back, side, or in front, I am always Gail Teixeira and I am always batting. It does not matter. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for kindly allowing me to conclude.

On the issue of transparency and accountability, the Government has mechanisms. Do they work well? Can we make them work better? Yes, we can! Yes, we can! We can do these things better. There are mechanisms in place which emerged only a short period ago. I believe as a Guyanese woman that as we found the answers in constitutional reform and parliamentary reform, we can find the answers to these issues if we talk to each other instead of playing these games.

The Integrity Commission, some of the speakers talked about it but they seemed to be ill-informed. Since February, last year the new President spoke to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition about the name of a person for the chairmanship of the Integrity Commission. We are still waiting. We, on this side, are very patient.

It is the same thing with the constitutional appointments, the constitutional appointments which allow the Leader of the Opposition to have a veto vote on the President. We put it in the constitutional reform. Do you know what it has showed? I think Mr. Pollard wrote several times

in the newspapers that this was a level of, at least, naivety because there should have been a saving clause which allows the President to act when tremendously long periods went on and no agreement could be reached. We built in political gridlock – we! This Parliament, in the best interest of what was a gentleman’s agreement, the behaviour of men of honour, and I underline men of honour because no woman was a part of that arrangement!

Inclusivity of political parties, civil society, non-governmental organisations and communities, if the Hon. Members on the other side believe that Dr. Ashni Singh and Ministers do not consult with their stakeholders about what has to go in the Budget and all of that is funnelled into a funnel area where we can then say what we can do and what we cannot do. If we do not look at the participation across the board with many groups... the private sector has come out and supported this.

The private sector, by the way, in the 1980s and 1990s was almost non-existent, thanks to the nationalisation that was taking place. There is now an emerging private sector that is vibrant, that wants opportunities and wants to get out there. We have investors coming in. There are 20-odd Canadian companies in this country. There has been a gentleman from Jamaica – Mr. Lumumba will remind me of his name – who has been making quite positive statements about this country. Why do we like to undress ourselves like this as Guyanese? Why do we like to pull ourselves down? Is this what the colonisers did to us? Did they make us always want to pull ourselves down?

Our greatest challenge is in the area of the political environment. Every issue is a problem; every issue is an issue. We have seen that there has been stymieing of changes, of amendments, of movement, based on the so-called “new dispensation.”

In concluding, we, the Government of Guyana, are being tried and tested at this time. You, in the Opposition, Alliance For Change (AFC) and A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), are also being tried and tested.

The times require visionaries and wise leaders, not myopic, not nitpicking and not thin-skinned leadership. We need leadership that is clear and has the courage and strength to do what is right. It is not about the “tail wagging the dog.” Political leadership is about doing the best one can

with the environment that one has and being able to make change, and good change, not bad change.

This Budget will be a challenge to cut, as some say, as it caters for and moves Guyana forward. It moves the development of our nation forward. It provides an opportunity for us to fix things and to do things even better. It is premised, with the numbers and areas that it has dealt with, on the improvement of the quality of life of our people – all of our people.

Whenever we start the consideration of the Estimates, to those who would want to use the scissors, knife, axe or razor blade, I wish them well because if they think they are going to cut from one area and put the money into another area, it is not going to work that way. I look forward to the consideration of the Estimates.

The Budget of \$208 billion reflects the good standing of our nation, our economy, and our ability as Guyanese to improve and overcome the challenges of the last years and in the last year and to still be able to come with a Budget that is still pro-poor and pro-growth. We have been honourable and we have kept the promises we made to the Guyanese people in our Manifesto.

This is the *last-ditch effort*; this is the last day of the general debate to call on the Members on the other side to be wise. Wisdom is not about following the popular course. Wisdom is about judging what is right and what would be in the best interest.

I commend this Budget to the House. I thank and congratulate Minister Ashni Singh, Bishop Edghill, the Ministry of Finance staff and, most of all, our President and Cabinet who approved this Budget for us to bring it to this House.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Leader of the Opposition [Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger]: Mr. Speaker, I just have a matter of clarification with reference to a remark made by the last speaker. On every single occasion that the President of this Republic has invited me to consult on any appointments, I have accepted those invitations and I have held those consultations with the President, the last one being consultation on the appointment of the Chancellor of the Judiciary and the Chief Justice. The President has never invited me to any consultation to which I failed to attend.

Secondly, I submitted, several months ago, a list of my recommendations for appointments to the President and there was some exchange of correspondence from the Head of the Presidential Secretariat. But I have never received any correspondence from the President inviting me to any consultations or to discuss any matter concerning the appointments to which I have not responded.

Ms. Teixeira: Just to clarify for the Hon. Member, I never blamed Mr. Granger. I never used his name. Furthermore, I talked about there being no appointment. There can be 100 talks. There have been discussions but there has been no appointments, no agreements.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, certainly I got the impression when you spoke that the Hon. Leader of the Opposition had been called upon and had failed to carry out his constitutional function. I believe that the clarification given was in order, because I, certainly, got that impression.

Mr. Trotman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make my contribution to this 2013 Budget which was presented on 25th March, 2013 by the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh. I want to begin by saying that this Budget propels a crisis not only here in the National Assembly but also throughout Guyana. I think it is unfortunate that the Government side believes its own propaganda that everything is hunky-dory in relation to this Budget. I would advise that that side of the House take more time to go in the streets and talk to the people individually, not in orchestrated meetings, but in meetings in which they will be able to get frank opinions about what people feel, and they would be surprised at what people feel.

I want to begin my contribution to the 2013 Budget debate by alluding to two developments which took place by addressing two issues which took place during the Hon. Minister of Finance's presentation.

The first has to do with the broadcast of his presentation via the public address system outside of the Parliament Buildings.

I believe that the second issue, which I will also refer to, when juxtaposed against the first, will expose the Government's undemocratic behaviour.

The decision to broadcast from the National Assembly assumes tremendous importance, particularly in the context of a motion that was passed in this House on Friday, 10th August, 2012, which states:

- “1. This National Assembly declares that the right of citizens to assemble and to demonstrate peacefully should not be hindered by the Guyana Police Force or any other agency or institution of state;
2. The Guyana Police Force should relocate its barricades so as to allow freedom of assembly within a closer proximity of the National Assembly, Public Buildings; and
3. The Parliament Office makes arrangements for the broadcast of National Assembly sittings in the environs of the National Assembly.”

It cannot be overstressed, Mr. Speaker, that the resolved clauses of the motion I referred to called for three distinct courses of action, which are intended to help to enshrine democracy in this country of ours. You will recall that during the debate on the motion, the Minister of Home Affairs attempted to belittle the proposal to broadcast from the Public Buildings by claiming it would be a nuisance and disruptive to agencies and organisations in close proximity to the National Assembly, including the sittings of the Assembly. What has transpired is that the system was used successfully and the Minister was proven to be wrong.

My only complaint insofar as the broadcast was concerned was that little or no advanced publicity was given to the public about its implementation. While offering congratulations to you, the Clerk and his staff, I am compelled to say that I hope you will now move to institutionalise the arrangement and, further, I hope it is not the intention to broadcast now and in the future only selective Members' presentations.

Sir, if that is the intention, Parliament Office will be guilty of aiding and abetting a crime against the people of this country and making a mockery of the third Resolved Clause in the motion. Already, we have seen that it is only the Minister of Finance's speech which was broadcast, thereby making a mockery of the motion. As I had said during the debate on the motion, people want to know what their representatives are saying when they are in here and nothing should

preclude them from knowing and being involved in the process. This becomes even more important in light of how some Members' contributions are being dealt with by the National Communications Network (NCN) and other media houses. Parliament Office is obliged to do all within its powers to give real meaning to the motion.

The intention was never about partial implementation of the motion, but implementation of it in all of its aspects. It is clear that Clauses 1 and 2 of the motion are yet to be implemented in keeping with its spirit and intent. The barriers around the Assembly are more restrictive than before. We, in this honourable House, have to be concerned about the lengths the Government is prepared to go to in order to derecognise and trample on the democratic rights of citizens. That behaviour makes a mockery of the Minister of Finance's boast of the efforts of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government to build a better Guyana for all Guyanese.

The second issue I wish to refer to is in relation to the Minister of Finance's lament in his speech of the positions the majority of the Members of this House have taken in respect to issues of national importance over the months of the life of this Tenth Parliament. He dared to lecture us on the wisdom of our actions and, in his arrogance, demonstrated a pronounced weakness in the thinking of the PPP/C, which is its failure to come to grips with the reality of the situation.

The PPP/C Members credit every action of the majority in the House as an obsession by the majority to prove the importance of what they like to call the one-seat majority. They talk as if that one seat is represented by a single vote. The reality is far different from what they pretend and would like their constituents to believe. If one thing is true, it is that on 28th November, 2011, a shift took place in the voting pattern in Guyana, which sent shock waves down the spines of the leaders of the PPP/C. That shift saw more than 10,000, not one - I repeat, more than 10,000 persons - abandoning the PPP/C and voting against that party. The leaders of the PPP/C are trying their best to understand what that development means for their future existence. They are wondering how many more will abandon them in the months ahead. But like the proverbial ostrich, which hides its head in the sand, they seem not to want to understand that in taking the actions they took, 10,000 and more voters had demonstrated the extent to which they had become fed up with that party and had deliberately aligned themselves to forces they have confidence in. By doing so, those persons took a conscious decision to mandate the majority to a course of action that irretrievably changed the status quo.

What is taking place in this National Assembly is, therefore, what the people want. Some people call it by the fascinating name – people’s power. By whatever name it is called, it represents a determination by the people of this country that what existed prior to 28th November, 2011, would no longer prevail.

Let me take this opportunity to offer some advice to the Hon. Minister of Finance of this minority Government. You should get out of your ivory tower and go on the streets. You will be surprised when you hear what people are saying. You will hear them saying to the majority that in the PPP/C there is a criminal cabal and a dictatorship to dismantle and dismantle it we must.

We who sit on this side of the House are obliged to respond to the demands of the majority of the populace. The Minister of Finance and the rest of the leaders of the PPP/C and the remainder who sit on the opposite side of the House had better get used to that idea and do so quickly. It seems to me that the Minister of Finance’s and the Government’s concept of democracy is that the Government talks and cracks the whip and the majority jumps. That is why even when he talks about consultation, he honours the principles of it in the breach. If consultation enjoyed a high, meaningful priority on this Government’s agenda, we would have been dealing with a budget today which, I am sure, would not have been as contentious as this one is. As the situation now stands, the Budget, in its present form, must not suffice. It must be changed to reflect the true situation in the country or must be voted down.

I want to touch on public sector wages, salaries and other benefits. As I sat listening to the Minister of Finance unveil his plans for 2013 on March 25th, it occurred to me that he was engaged in a lengthy exercise, one that consumed more than three hours of spewing what I described as pure rhetoric - hot air. One could not escape the feeling that as we sat through his web of fantasia, he was engaged in rehashing a set of principals which he has been making year after year. What was even more disturbing to me, but not surprising, was that he completely ignored the proposals made to him by APNU and AFC for relief to the most vulnerable categories in the society.

Sir, it boggles the mind that throughout his lengthy discourse he gave no real thought to enlarging the earning power for that large group of people who fall within the category known as public sector workers. When will it be improved? Is it that Government’s intention to address the

grave anomalies... What the Minister, however, did was to play his usual con game when he tried to give the impression that workers earning in excess of \$50,000 per month will, from year of income 2013, benefit...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, the reference to the Minister playing a “con game” does not rest well with me. I ask that it be withdrawn. Words used have been “*sleight of hand*” and things like that but “con game” connotes negatively... It does not sit well. I am asking that it be removed and be replaced by other words.

Mr. Trotman: I would say “unacceptable”.

...that workers earning in excess of \$50,000 per month will, from year of income 2013, benefit from a huge package of relief, as reflected in the reduction of personal income tax from 33 1/3 per cent to 30 per cent. What the Hon. Minister of Finance deliberately failed to do was to point out that there is a very large number of workers in this country who earn far less than \$50,000 per month and for those who earn in excess of that amount, in money terms, the astronomical relief he alluded to amounts to 3 1/3 cents on every dollar they would be required to pay. With an inflation rate of 3.5 per cent, the low paid worker is not better off in real terms.

There can be no substitute for immediate increases both in the earning power to cushion the effect in the rising cost of living and improving the allowances and other conditions of workers.

3.11 p.m.

Let us not pretend otherwise. The much sought after increases in salaries and allowances should be seen by the Government as an investment in people and not merely as a payoff.

It endows workers with the capacity to address, albeit minimally, the problems posed by the escalating prices in goods and services which occur with great rapidity. Where is the increased allowance that nurses and other personnel employed in the health sector have been clamouring for 20 years after the last measly increase was given? Why are retired nurses who are reemployed and, I believe, contracted, are not being paid the gratuity and other benefits paid to other contract workers? Are they in fact contracted? If they are the Government is obliged to pay them their entitlements because they are giving service over and beyond the call of duty in an effort to give meaning to the troubled patient care delivery system. What about the conditions of

work for all other public servants? When will they be improved? Is it Government's intention to address these grave anomalies only when strike action is taken? I submit, therefore, that the failure to address these questions with the urgency they deserve is unconscionable and it is intended to impose greater burdens on an already enslaved group of workers. In that situation, it is incumbent on the majority in this House to encourage and be part of workers' efforts to improve their lot.

On the question of Governance, I want to say that the Minister of Finance in his Budget Speech devoted only two paragraphs to the very important issue of Governance. In the one sentence, first paragraph, he tersely stated that:

“...events which have unfolded since the 28th November, 2011 General and Regional Elections, particularly in the National Assembly, have tested the mettle of our governance systems and political maturity”.

The second paragraph merely referred to ongoing reviews of Guyana's Treaty Obligations - a subject which could have been better treated in an earlier section of the Minister's speech dealing with Foreign Relations. This section on Governance merited much more extensive treatment since, with “good governance” Guyana's growth rate would probably have been in the double digits, seeing that the economy is moving from a very low economic base.

The Minister is reluctant to deal with the subject of governance because of the indefensible behaviour of his Party, which, having lost its parliamentary majority, seeks to make the Opposition ineffective by tying the latter up in the courts and the President, acting like a General Secretary rather than a Head of State, refuses to sign any bill with which his Party is not in agreement.

Guyana would have seemed a more stable society and welcoming environment for domestic and foreign investors and a more attractive alternative location for those skilled and semi-skilled would-be emigrants, if the President, soon after the last election, had sought to engage the Opposition in inclusive governance arrangements or some form of genuine shared governance. Rather, there was a rush to form a one party executive government, in keeping with a 20-year-old tradition of “winner-take-all”.

Good governance relates to the effective implementation of democratic practices; the full participation of all stakeholders - political, civic and private sector; fair and equitable treatment for all, including non-traditional supporters; transparency and effective disclosure; regular and timely reporting to those whom the elected are supposed to be representing - especially information concerning the results of feasibility studies and related choice and identity of foreign joint venture partners; accountability, particularly with respect to the determination of project costs, and a level playing field relating to the bidding and tendering process. What has taken place since 1992 is a refutation of all of these principles. Despite the solemn agreements under the 1999 Herdmanston Accord, the current regime persists in blocking the formation of a Public Procurement Commission and so kickbacks continue to proliferate with recipients of the illicit gains sheltering under a non-functioning asset declaration system and a non-existent Integrity Commission. The resulting corruption accounts for a significant loss in Guyana's potential rate of economic growth. This loss is not reduced as perverse thinkers would want to believe, but magnified by a suspicious lack of enthusiasm about going after known drug lords masquerading as businessmen.

Public Sector workers' interests are not being served, since the Public Service Commission, Police Service Commission, Teaching Services Commission and Judicial Services Commission exist only in name, with the Government imposing arbitrary and discriminatory contract and non-contract employment conditions and levels of remuneration devoid of opportunities for bargaining by the workers' representatives. In addition, senior appointments at the various Government agencies are based on party loyalty, rather than merit and professional qualifications, resulting in a loss of operational efficiency. Merit and professional qualifications are not a major requirement for promotion; a classic example being the position of Auditor General. In certain cases, the favoured are not fired or if fired they are not placed before the courts, despite gross financial misconduct as for example with National Communication Network (NCN). Similar party loyalty buttressed by strong bouts of cronyism accounts for the grotesquely unfair nature of the recent distribution of radio licenses and related frequencies.

Non-adherence to rule of law has therefore become the norm. Outrageous examples of flouting of the law abound, including failure to implement court compensation awards for public officials' misconduct and deliberate misinterpretation of the Chief Justice's decisions concerning

the ability of Parliament to make amendments to the Budget. Even more criminal is the Government failure to recognise the dictates of the Guyana Constitution, with respect to the financing of independent agencies such as GECOM, the strict conditions for access to the Contingency Fund, and the need for all revenues, including those of the parallel Treasury, that is National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) and Lotto and Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) funds, to be placed in the Consolidated Fund. In this regard, the current Minister of Finance needs to be disciplined by this House for gross violations of the Constitution. His conduct seems to know no bounds or any sense of professional decency. How can a Minister of Finance be Chairman of NICIL and therefore, in fact, he is reporting to and advising his very self. This is an absurdity. And how can someone remain as Minister of Finance when his wife is one of the main officials responsible for auditing the State's finances? Is not the conflict of interest pellucidly clear to all and sundry?

The truth is that every decision of this Government is informed by arrogance and the expectation that an ever loyal and partisan constituency will return it to power. Consultation is not its watchword. Thus, for example, attempts could have been made to increase the electricity tariff in Linden and appropriate the Plaisance Community Centre playfield, without any consultation with the communities.

This is a reflection of the outrageously partisan nature of the state-owned media. However, in a more general sense, there is clear need for a ministerial code of conduct. What is also required is a sharpened awareness of ministerial responsibility, as evidenced, for example, by the uncaring reaction to the tragic shootings of peaceful demonstrators in Georgetown and Linden.

Finally, Government needs a complete revamping of its governance framework. Power needs to be de-centralised at both the central and local government levels. At the central level, the 1980 Constitution needs further amendment, including diminution of the power of the office of President. In addition, critical institutions are required to be established or strengthened in order to provide much needed checks and balances. At the local government level, there is need for strengthening and extensive reform, including a diminution of the power of the Minister of Local Government and a strengthening of regional and municipal powers *vis-à-vis* those of the central government. Will this power hungry minority Executive Government facilitate such structural change or will it continue to stymie constitutional progress? Above all, the plural society that is

Guyana requires a new paradigm of political cooperation and an attitudinal transformation, particularly on the part of those who have been in office for the last 21 years and who deserve a failure grade of “F”, as far as good governance is concerned.

On the matter of corruption, I want to say that when I listened to the Junior Finance Minister speak to Government’s proposals to address the question of corruption, I wondered which planet he came from. It is clear to me that he does not understand that when you are part of the problem, you cannot be part of the solution. Listening to him, I got the impression that he has promised a miracle to resolve this tremendous crisis. It seems as if he has not learned his lesson. He ought to know since 28th November, 2011 when he promised the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) that with Jesus’ assistance, he will deliver Guyana to them and failed, that he is incapable of delivering miracles.

Mr. Speaker: With respect, Hon. Member it was quite a notorious statement and that would not be accurate. So if we are going to make a reference to the statement, let us be accurate. I think what the Minister publicly said was if Jesus was in Guyana, he would be voting for his Party. That is what was said.

Mr. Trotman: May I say that when I listened to him he was inferring that Jesus would have been by his side listening...

Mr. Speaker: That is a fair inference you may draw; you may put it that way.

Mr. Trotman: Corruption is institutionalised in this society and the establishment of an audit department and the conducting workshops with stakeholders will not allow for its eradication. The way to go is for the Government to start by stopping the attempts to deceive people about the way forward. They must put in place the much needed Procurement Commission to oversee the award of contracts, establish the National Assembly Budget Office to oversee how appropriations are being dealt with and consult with genuine patriots on the other mechanisms that are required to deal with the problem and implement the proposals they make.

As is normally the case, the reliefs which have been identified would benefit those who already live in great comfort and place the disadvantaged in an even more disadvantageous position. It is worth noting that among the proposals for improving the living standards of the poor and the

powerless, from the majority side of the House, are recommendations for the reduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) and increasing of the old age benefits to \$15,000 per month. These have been ignored while benefits to cronies and friends have been increased, for example the reduction of the Property Tax will mostly benefit the property class.

I note that the Minister spent a lot of time talking about poverty alleviation. I wonder if the \$1.1 billion appropriations for the Ministry of Education's School Feeding programme for school children cover the cost of providing to those children on the coast whose parents are unable to provide a meal at lunch time, as was recommended by the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) via me a few months ago.

Let me remind this House that I had brought to the attention of the National Assembly and the acting Minister of Education, Hon. Dr. Frank Anthony, a situation which indicated that a large number of young male and female students on the coast are without meals at lunch time and are forced to beg, and in some cases steal, to satisfy their hunger. As a result, they are exposed to the demands for sex by some so-called benefactors. I had requested that a pilot study be undertaken in Georgetown to ascertain the validity of the concerns I expressed. The acting Minister had pointed to the milk and biscuits distribution as Government's attempts to address the problem and had requested that I provide details of the incidents so he could check, but I told him the best source of information is the recommended pilot study. My question at this time is: has the pilot study been undertaken? If not, why not? Let me make the point...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member before you go on to make the point your time has elapsed. There has to be an application for an extension.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Member be given five minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and carried

Mr. Trotman: Let me make the point that while the milk and biscuits distribution provide some form of relief, it is not given to each child and is not a substitute for a hot meal at lunch time. Additionally, how many Ministers in this House would allow their children to consume a meal of milk and biscuits every day?

This matter should be of great concern to the Ministry and steps should already have been taken to address the problem. We cannot pretend to be concerned about the plight of young people and, when information is provided which underscores the depths of depravity in the society, we pass the buck to others. We talk about the high rate of pregnancy in schools and then we refuse to identify with a situation which points to one of the reasons why pregnancy among our female students and buggery of our young male students is as high as it is in the school system. I believe that the majority in the House will willingly support an appropriation which is intended to address the problems of providing a hot meal at lunch time to each needy child throughout the school system. I, therefore, want to use this opportunity to call on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education to address this oversight in the 2013 budget allocations.

I know that the APNU and the Alliance For Change (AFC)'s regional representatives have spoken eloquently on the matter of local government, so I will not touch that. I was not here to hear Minister Ganga Persaud's presentation, but I was wondering if he has dealt with the troubling question of Regional Executive Officer (REO) Mr. Harsawack and his delinquencies in relation to his handling of resources of the...

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]: On a Point of Order, please, Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the age of the Hon. Member, but the Hon. Member is repeatedly breaching the rules of this House. He just defamed a person who cannot stand here and defend himself and for whom he has no evidence of delinquency. There has been no finding of delinquency about this person's work.

Mr. Speaker: I believe that a no-confidence motion was passed by the majority of the councillors of Region No. 8, and that is a notorious fact. Whether or not action has been taken is a different matter. Certainly, it is the opinion of the majority of councillors that they have lost confidence in this particular officer.

But, Mr. Trotman, to make a statement of delinquency without being able to support... anyone can come and say anything.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Speaker, my support for the statement lies in the fact that a motion was moved and passed and the Minister was written to about the motion. The Minister was asked to remove the person.

Mr. Speaker: In that case Mr. Trotman who would be delinquent? Not Mr. Harsawack. If you call on the Minister to act, if there has been a demand on the Minister to act and for whatever reason you cannot then target... [*Minister Ganga Persaud rose*] One second Minister, we are not at you. I am just saying that if there has been a demand made on the Minister to take certain actions and those actions have not been taken, I do not even know if he has been formally called on, then if it is in that context you cannot accuse Mr. Harsawack of being delinquent. That is the point that I am making.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Harsawack has been delinquent in relation to how he carried out his functions and what flowed from that was the no confidence motion and the Minister also is delinquent because he has failed to address the motion.

Minister of Local Government [Mr. G. Persaud]: Mr. Speaker...

Mr. Speaker: One second Mr. Minister. What I would say is that until such time that we have the actual document before us setting out what transgressions they were - if any - I would not allow you to say he was delinquent which led to, because we do not know the basis of, and it is not a subject matter in this House for us to just say he was and therefore. I know there was, but truthfully I have not been able to see the motion, I have not been able to see the resolve clause. It is not in the body of this House and, therefore, we cannot just say the man was delinquent. We know a motion was passed. [*Interruption*] We have to take judicial notice of something that is before us. I know something was done. That is the most I would allow you to say, that a motion of no confidence was passed, but not to say to describe him as being delinquent or otherwise.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Speaker, would it help if I lay over the documents in this House?

Mr. Speaker: It would help, but you have about two and one half minutes left in your presentation. So far, Mr. Persaud, because we are dealing with a Point of Order, I do not see the need for you to rise for anything.

Mr. G. Persaud: Very well, Sir.

Mr. Trotman: In concluding Mr. Speaker, I want to say two things; first, some home truths: Guyanese are surviving, not because of the so-called stable economic environment, but because

of their wits, combined with remittance flows, fortuitous foreign investments related to high commodity prices, and illicit proceeds from the drug trade.

Guyanese are surviving in gold mining activities in the forbidding interior terrain, not because of Government provision of access roads and other infrastructure, but because of favourable international prices.

Guyanese are surviving, not because of Government provision of basic needs, but in spite of wasteful, corrupt and distorting Government expenditures, including notable white elephants.

Guyanese are barely surviving in the hotel industry, not with the help of any Government subsidies, but with the threat of Government's Marriott financing crowding them out of the industry.

This Government is wont to take credit for certain recent economic developments, but the truth is that the Government is more of a hindrance than a help.

It is the product of the abovementioned various economic factors that contribute to macro-economic stability and not the much vaunted Government policy intervention.

What we currently have in Guyana can be characterised as a case of "public failure and private success".

Secondly, I want to use this opportunity to bring to your attention a saying which goes like this, "Might Is Right Until Right Gets Ready." I want to repeat it, "Might Is Right Until Right Gets Ready."

What it refers to sir is the way in which governments use and abuse power and the people's eventual response, which is inevitably, vicious. Many governments, including this PPP/C Government, have a way of believing that because it controls the military apparatus of the State they can and do use brutal measures to coerce citizens to obedience of their dictates. That only works for a while. History is replete with instances where the people, even after years of tyrannical behaviour from ruling parties, have risen up and thrown off the yokes of tyranny. In Guyana the situation is not dissimilar. The crisis which is partly reflected in this Budget, require an urgent solution. In this crisis we have been presented with a wonderful opportunity not only to

reflect on where we are but to determine where we are going. Mr. Speaker, let us, even at this late hour, craft the kind of budget, which will take Guyana beyond where it is. The consequences for this country, if this cannot be done, are too grave to consider. The people are waiting to hear from us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Rohee]: Mr. Speaker, I did not want to interrupt the Hon. Member while he was speaking.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a clarification on something said?

Mr. Rohee: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The Hon. Member is on record as saying and I quote:

“People out there see the PPP as a criminal cabal to be dismantled.”

Let me repeat:

“People out there see the PPP as a criminal cabal to be dismantled.”

As I look around the Members on my side of this House I see a number of Honourable Members who are members of the People Progressive Party. By implication, these Honourable Members are members of a criminal cabal; they are involved in criminality; they have committed some crime and therefore are dishonourable according to what the Member said. I would wish to have this description of the People’s Progressive Party as a criminal cabal expunged from the record or the Member be called upon to withdraw these remarks.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Member was reporting what people said he did not say he felt... I recall when not so long ago the Hon. Prime Minister gave a very strong statement in this House following events in Agricola and they were allowed.

3.41 p.m.

Members were, I would not say accused, but certainly not even the connotation, but it was suggested. The Member is reporting what people said to him. What I will allow into the record is that a clarification was made. I accept that indeed, there are Hon. Members of this House who are associated with that party and they do not, in any way, see that party as being a criminal

enterprise. I believe that the clarification is allowed and I will permit it to go in. The statement was just a report as was the case this afternoon. Sir, clarification is allowed and is part of the record.

In terms of it being withdrawn, you see the Member is saying that the people said.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, this is a serious charge. If the Hon. Member has information at his disposal, that there are Members in the PPP/C who are part of a criminal cabal, I would encourage him to share this information with the police or I would encourage the police to visit him to gather the information.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Member, you are advised to forward any information you may have to the authorities. That is the end of the matter. I invite the Hon. Attorney General to speak. You will go uninterrupted.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please note that I have promised that the Attorney General will go uninterrupted, until we take the suspension.

Mr. Nandlall: The Hon. Mr. Trotman, and it is unfortunate that he carries your name, has put us in quite a dismal mood, so the task is mine to bring energy to this House.

I have been in this Parliament since 2006 and I have spoken on every Budget since. I wish to say that this is the most people oriented, people friendly and welfare oriented budget of them all. Like the speakers before me on this side of the House, I wish to extend congratulations to Dr. Ashni Singh and his diligent and competent staff for a job that is well done.

We have heard a lot of things about this Budget from both sides of the House. But any dispassionate examination of this Budget would lead to the ineluctable conclusion that this Budget, in its focus and allocations, targets almost every conceivable interest group in our population and alters in a material way their financial, economic and social status and well being for the better. These groupings include, but are not limited, to our farmers, public sector employees, private sector employees, private sector employers, sugar workers, professionals,

children, students, business sector – both small and large, single mothers, pensioners and our Amerindians all have been touched in some material way by budgetary allocations contained in Budget 2013.

This Budget therefore touches the life of every single Guyanese. Fundamentally, the Guyanese people have recognised that. They have recognised that. Someone made reference to the fact that we should go on the streets and listen to the people. Well I want to say that we have done that and the people have given us their full endorsement; both individually and through their organisations. One only has to read the newspapers and they will see the Private Sector Commission endorsing the Budget; the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce is endorsing the budget; the labour movement Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG) endorsing the Budget. One has to look at the stakeholders' meeting which the President entertained. At that meeting, every conceivable major stakeholder organisation was present and they gave their emphatic and full endorsement to Budget 2013.

Indeed and in fact the only people I know in Guyana who does not support this Budget is the 33 on this side of the House. [*Interruption*] Your supporters support the Budget; you do not and that is the truth. [*Interruption*] [**Mr. B. Williams:** It is the majority you are talking to.] It will not be the majority for long and that is what is important.

It is not my intention to recite all the benefits and other facets of Budget 2013. My Colleagues have done that with admirable clarity and in commendable details. I wish, however, to express some views about the intention stated by the Opposition, both parties, to cut the Budget.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, before you do and this is by way of a personal explanation and perhaps an apology. There was a young lady here in a dress that matches your tie. I do not know if there is any way she was associated with you. I had asked that she...Has she left?

Mr. Nandlall: Could the young lady stand and let me see her?

Mr. Speaker: I think she was asked to, not to leave, but it was brought to her attention. But if in any way, I now realise that she was associated you, I apologise.

Mr. Nandlall: That there was any correlation? This tie is just to represent the prosperity in the mining industry. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: I see. Go ahead.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, may I use the fact that I am on my leg and whatever privilege that brings me, to invite the young lady to come back? Thank you very much, Sir. I would like the time to be restored.

Mr. Speaker, if I may resume. The Opposition in this House regrettably have expressed the intention, even prior to the presentation of the Budget and of course, subsequent to the presentation of the Budget. They have expressed the unfortunate intention to cut Budget 2013. I have looked very carefully and I have listened very carefully in the way their desire was expressed and I get the impression that by cutting the Budget, my Friends on the other side feel that they are somehow hurting the Government. I want to say to them that if they intend to cut the Budget to hurt the Government that is not what they are doing. They are hurting the Guyanese people when they cut the Budget. They are putting us in a state of anti-development when they cut the Budget. It is not about the Government.

I listened - I am aware of all the machinations that are going on in the background so that numbers can be made right here; so that that budget cut can be affected. So determined are my people on the other side to cut the welfare of the Guyanese people that they are engaged in all forms of machinations.

I listened to a television programme two weeks ago, featuring my friend, Mr. Greenidge, the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan and the Hon. Member, Mr. Moses Nagamootoo. **[Ms. Ally:** Good team.] Master team - distinguished honourable gentlemen. They were on the television speaking about Budget 2013. They were speaking about what they will do with Budget 2013; how they will cut it. I was listening with rapt attention because so engrossed were these Members, I could see the excitement in their eyes as they were discussing the instruments that they will use. Mr. Ramjattan spoke very passionately about the size of his instrument that he will bring. He said the bigger the Budget the bigger the size.

When I looked at the gentlemen on the television, it appeared as though cutting the Budget was some form of political masturbation to these men; so excited were they. I want to tell them that when they engage in that cutting exercise as they seek their political orgasm, they will break the interest of the Guyanese people. They will mess up the lives of the Guyanese people.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Attorney General, one second. I think you have made your point and I ask that you move on from there please.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, thank you very much. The Guyanese people understand the imagery and what the Opposition is doing with their Budget. They have identified projects that they are going to cut. They have said that they are going to cut the budgetary allocations to the Amaila Falls Project. Why is it that the Guyanese people, in the year 2013, not entitled to a reliable and cheap and renewable source of electricity? Their Government wants to give it to them, but the Opposition wants to deny them of electricity. *[Interruption]*

Another project that they have identified is the new Speciality Hospital. In the year 2013, are the Guyanese people not entitled to the best health care in the world? Their Government is prepared to give it to them and the Opposition is prepared to take it away from them.

Another project identified is the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA). Are Guyanese in the year 2013 not entitled to a modern airport? Their Government wants to give them, but the Opposition wants to deny them.

What wrong have the Guyanese people done? What sins have they committed not to be entitled to facilities that are available to people all over the world; that is the question? What is it that the Guyanese people have done; what wrong have they done; what sin have they committed to be denied these basic facilities that are available to people everywhere? My grandmother would say, *They got cockabea* or as Mr. Rohee would say, "Goat bite them". What is wrong; why must the Guyanese people not get these facilities?

There is also another side to the cuts proposed. There is a legal side. This House is the premiere law making institution of the land. This House, therefore, has a responsibility to ensure that the Constitution of the country and the laws of the land are obeyed. This House cannot take a position that is contrary to the Constitution and contrary to the law. Justice Chang in a 34 page

ruling outlined why the Opposition has no power to cut the budget. Justice Chang said so in a ruling. If the Parliament is going to take a position that they are not going to obey the laws of the land and they are not going to obey orders of the Court, well they do so at their own peril. [**Mr. Nagamootoo:** What do you intend to do?] Well you see my friend is saying what do I intend to do. I do not want to do anything. Let the people see that you are telling the Court “instruments”. That is what the people will see.

Forget what I say and what Chief Justice Chang said, there is an article written by ...
[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Members allow the Minister to proceed, to make his case. I am interested in hearing his article. Go ahead.

Mr. Nandlall: There is an article written in the *Kaieteur* Newspapers – Sir, the *Kaieteur News* as you know, was never a friend of the Government. Mr. Ramjattan is the legal advisor to the *Kaieteur News*. This is what the article’s title is *The AFC’s bark is not matched with its bite at the moment*, published on the 26th March, 2013, by an author, Peeping Tom.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a legal opinion?

Mr. Nandlall: It is not a legal opinion, but it is my view and I will incorporate it into my address. This is what the writer says:

“The courts have held that the Opposition cannot cut the Budget; they can only approve or not approve.

While this is just a preliminary ruling, it must be borne in mind that rulings of a court must be complied with until such time as they are overturned or reversed. Society will descend into anarchy if bodies of persons decide to not comply with rulings of the court, regardless of how they may feel about a specific judgement.

The AFC is insisting that it can cut the Budget because the ruling by the Chief Justice (CJ) was just a preliminary ruling. It should bear in mind a number of things. Firstly, an interim injunction is a temporary measure that is instituted until the final determination of

the matter under consideration. Should citizens adopt the same position with interim injunctions as the AFC is adopting with the CJ's ruling?

Should citizens not comply with an interim injunction until it is made absolute? Imagine the implications for the rule of law should the citizens decide to not comply with interim injunctions.

The fact that the Chief Justice made a preliminary ruling does not negate its potency. It was a ruling, one that was of significant length, and it was made no doubt because the necessity existed for the National Assembly and other interested parties to be so guided. It should be recalled that there was also a preliminary ruling in the case of the challenge of the denial of the right of Minister Rohee to speak in the National Assembly and when the final ruling came there was a clear and unambiguous injunction that it was binding.

In that ruling Chief Justice had noted that while it was not for the courts to interfere with the workings and operations of the National Assembly, the Court was the guardian of the constitution and has the jurisdiction to determine whether the actions of the National Assembly were in contravention with the Constitution.

He also observed that while parliament can determine the extent of rights and privileges of its members, so too can the courts since such a determination concerns questions of law, and when the court so determines it is, 'final and binding'."

The article concludes by telling us, that the AFC is taking us down the road to anarchy.

My friends are inviting me to go to the Chief Justice's decision and I will. I understand that there is a forum later in this process that will allow me to address whether there is a cutting exercise and the legality of it and not. I intend to deal with the Chief Justice's ruling, but I do not have time on my side.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Carl Greenidge in his presentation, accused the Government of violating the law, the Constitution of the land, ignoring motions passed by the House or presenting a budget whose format violates the Constitution – in particular Article 222. With those arguments I

wish to treat. [**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Speak to the Budget.] All is part of it; it is the Budget I am speaking about.

This Government repeatedly, in this Tenth Parliament, has had to hold steadfast to the letter and spirit of the law and the Constitution of this land. The Opposition has indeed, using the language of the Hon. Minister of Finance, embarked upon a veritable plethora of constitutional actions, which have brought them in collision with the Constitution of this land. They forced us to go to courts on many occasions. They past motions – let us deal with the motions. The first set of motions had to deal with the cutting of the budget and we went to the Court. And, what did the Court rule? The cutting of the Budget was unconstitutional. [**Mr. Williams:** That is not the motion.] The second motion or the other motion that they moved, was to gag Minister Rohee from speaking in the Parliament. Mr. Speaker, they persuaded you to fall into error and to impose a gag on Minister Rohee.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Nandlall, be very careful there.

Mr. Nandlall: I know, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Nandlall: The court ruled that the gag imposed on Minister Rohee was unlawful. Your Honour ruled that the gag imposed on Minister Rohee was unlawful.

Mr. B. Williams: On a Point of Order. It is the same thing that we have been maintaining. The learned Attorney General distorts the rulings. We have asked him...

Mr. Speaker: With respect...

Mr. B. Williams: On a Point of Order...

Mr. Speaker: One second Mr. Williams. Mr. Nandlall is giving his interpretation of the Court's order; you have yours. At the appropriate time you can come with your interpretation too.

Mr. B. Williams: As it pleases you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed please.

Mr. Nandlall: The only problem is that Mr. Williams is in solitude with his interpretation. That aside, my friend, Mr. Trotman, took the Attorney General to court to deal with the Lotto Funds matter; another issue that Mr. Greenidge spoke about. The judge threw out the case at the preliminary point. If they cannot get the preliminary points correct, how can they get the subsistence correct?

We now come to Mr. Greenidge's favourite Article, Article 222 (A) of the Constitution. Mr. Greenidge is arguing, and he has a Bill to that effect pending in the House, that the Budget is presented in the wrong format. His argument as I apprehend them is that the items listed in Article 222 (A) namely, the Judiciary, the Rights Commission and the Auditor General Office, they should prepare and present their own budget and they in relations to the others excluding the Auditor General, should prepare and send their budget to the Clerk of the National Assembly, who should present it to this Parliament. In relations to the Auditor General, they should prepare their budget and send it to the Public Accounts Committee, where in this instance, Mr. Greenidge is the Chairman and that he will present the budget. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that if my friend can stand and site a single location on planet earth, where such a position obtains, I take my seat immediately.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, the presentation to which the distinguished Attorney General is making...

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Nandlall, please take your seat.

Mr. Greenidge: To which the distinguished Attorney General is making reference, had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the process by which the estimates from the individual entities he named: the Auditor General, etc, reached the Parliament. Article 222 (A) does not specify that process. That process has nothing to do with the interpretation. That process is the subject of the Amendment Act. The Constitution by way of Article 222 (A) requires that the Minister of Finance treat the agencies that he mentions, in exactly the same way as they treat the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC). In the Budget Estimates as of now, they are treated differently; illegally so. That is the point, so do not misrepresent what I said. I never directed my attention to the process. The process is in a different...

Mr. Nandlall: Mr. Speaker...

Mr. Greenidge: Can I finish, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Greenidge: The process is a subject of a Bill. The legality of whether or not a lump sum payment is reflected in the Estimates is a matter before us. That is what Article 222(A) is about.

Mr. Nandlall: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Greenidge in his presentation cited and accused the Government of a number of things throughout the year that they have passed motions, and that there are Bills we are not obeying. Among the irregularities that he has identified - that is one; I am not dealing with that. I am dealing with a second set of ... *[Interruption]* **[Mr. Greenidge:** There was no such section...] Of course, it is in the House here pending. It is a Constitutional amendment as well as an amendment to the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA). I am dealing with that. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: One second. Hon. Attorney General, are you saying that you are responding to statements made by Mr. Greenidge?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Greenidge is saying that he never said what you are claiming.

Mr. Nandlall: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Greenidge made a speech in this House in which he accused the Government a litany of unconstitutionality. *[Interruption]* I do not have to walk with Mr. Greenidge's speech, I made my notes – contemporaneous notes. Sir, my word must have some weight, you pointed out to that. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Let the Member proceed.

Mr. Nandlall: Thank you very much, Sir. The arguments advanced by Mr. Greenidge are completely without merit. The Constitution distributes power and we know it by the doctrine of Separation of Power; the powers of Government into three categories: the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. Among those powers distributed to the Executive is the financial

responsibility of the State. Among those financial responsibilities is the functional responsibility and obligation of presenting and preparing the National Estimates of Guyana.

4.11 p.m.

In the Constitution, Article 218, says exactly that. Article 218 says:

“The Minister responsible for Finance or any other Minister designated by the President shall cause to be prepared [He shall cause to be prepared] and laid before the National Assembly... [He shall prepare it and lay it before the National Assembly] within ninety days after the commencement of each financial year estimates of the revenues and expenditure of Guyana for that year.”

That is crystal clear. It does not say that you can take it and give it to the Clerk or that you can take it yourself. That is what the Constitution says. What Mr. Greenidge is asking us to do is not an ordinary constitutional breach. He is violating the separation of powers doctrine – foundational constitutional principles – because he is shifting power from the Executive to the Legislature and he is shifting power to himself and he is violating the Constitution. These are not ordinary violations. These are constitutional vulgarities of obscene proportion.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Nandlall, the Member has made to this House a proposal. It is not law. It has not been passed but what you are doing is accusing him of constitutional vulgarity as if of fact these are before the House for consideration; not determined.

Mr. Nandlall: I have also a report from Trinidad and Tobago because this issue arose in Trinidad and Tobago in the year 2000. The then Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago and the Chief Justice had some public exchanges; as a result of which the President of Trinidad and Tobago commissioned an inquiry into the Judiciary and appointed Lord Mackay of Clashfern, who is the Former Lord Chancellor of England – a distinguished gentleman – Justice Austin Amasah and Dr. L. M. Singee and they enquired into various matters concerning the judiciary and this is what they had to say when it came to the question of Finance and the Judiciary. I quote from the report, at page 45:

“The funds required for the judiciary are thus the responsibility of Parliament and decisions about funding require the Executive Government to lay budget before Parliament for approval.”

The Executive Government must lay it.

“The precise form of the budget is a matter for the Executive to consider in proposing and for Parliament to approve it.”

That is what Lord Mackay is saying, the Former Lord Chancellor of England. [**Mr. Nagamootoo:** ...what process?] Mr. Nagamootoo seems to be brighter than Lord Mackay. The Trinidadian Constitution is identical the Guyanese Constitution; the identical structure exists. The arguments that Mr. Greenidge has made and the accusations which he has levelled against this Government that we are violating the Constitution, that we are violating the rule of law... I have cited several sources – the court ruling in Guyana, Your Honour’s ruling and also a report from the Lord Chancellor of England – all of which vindicate the Government’s position.

To conclude that aspect of my presentation I humbly submit that the arguments of Mr. Greenidge are frivolous, vexatious, wholly misconceived and absolutely wrong.

I now turn to some aspects of the legal sector of our country. [*Interruption*] Sir, I am being disturbed continuously. I see the aid of your protection.

Mr. Speaker: You are entitled to it, but you are also entitled to give it. I observe that when you were seated there you were very good at making comments to people as they speak, so it is part of the cut and thrust, but you have it because I did say that you have...

Mr. Nandlall: Thank you and if you need mine, Sir, I will give it too.

Mr. Speaker: That is all right.

Mr. Nandlall: I now move to my sectoral responsibility. A responsibility of the Ministry of Legal affairs is the oversight and management of Guyana’s transport, land registrations and business registration systems and institutions. In 2012 our energy had been dedicated to much planning and reform in the law and institutions governing our system of transports, land registration and business registration.

In 2011, the business conducted at just one of those institutions, the Deeds Registry, numbered in excess of 40,000 transactions and included the registration recordings of 11,168 bills of sale, 228 new companies, 5,125 business names, 674 trademarks, 1,813 powers of attorney and 1,650 deeds and 11,094 conveyances and that excludes the conveyance done through the Ministry of Housing. Every single one of these transactions was urgent and life changing to the citizens using the process. Unfortunately, our laws and institutions, as currently constituted, were firstly unable to give the stakeholders the expedient service they deserve; secondly, are unable to keep pace with the increase in commercial transactions in Guyana and, thirdly, are unable to perform with the speed at which business arrangements are required to be made in the increasingly competitive world. To meet the demands of the stakeholders, the increase in commercial transactions and the efficiency and speed with which the commercial transacts are required to be processed we have embarked on a series of sweeping legal and institutional reforms in the following areas: the Deeds Registry, the Companies Registry, the Land Registry, the Business Name Process and the Official Gazette Notice Process.

We are all aware that in 2012 we drafted and piloted and collectively passed – and I extend my gratitude to the other side on this occasion for giving me full support when I brought the Gazette Bill to the National Assembly... [**Mr. B. Williams:** Call names.] ...the distinguished Members of the Opposition both the AFC and the APNU. That bill was indeed an important aspect of our legal system because, as I explained then, the Official Gazette remained as part of our legal landscape for almost 300 years but in a very haphazard way. That bill has put it on a firm footing but more fundamentally it has allowed access, via the internet, to thousand of Guyanese both in and out of Guyana. It was formally launched, the Official Gazette online, that is, in February, 2013, and so far we have had over 25,000 hits. Every Friday at about 3.30 p.m. one can go onto ones computer and log on to the Official Gazette available for that week. So far just one weekend we have missed and it was the ‘Good Friday weekend’.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time has elapsed. You would need an extension.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I proposed that the Hon. Minister be given 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put and carried.

Mr. Nandlall: The Business Name Registration: In 2012 we also drafted and piloted through the Parliament and passed the Business Name Registration Amendment Bill. It was published in the Official Gazette on the 30th August, 2012, and passed by the Parliament. The purpose of the amending act is to stagger the process of annual renewal of business names using the anniversary dates of their registration, instead of a defined period in January of every year. The rationale was to eradicate the mischief of requiring every single registered business owner to present themselves to the registry in January of every year to reregister. This requirement posed great difficulties for business owners and the registry, itself, and hours and hours were lost and, of course, a number of staff had to be involved. By staggering the process on the anniversary dates we have removed that difficulty.

The Deeds Registry: Another substantial series of reforms have been undertaken in relation to the Deeds Registry and the Companies Registry – the vital institutions which are the repository of records of land ownership and all legal commercial transactions in Guyana. As part of a plan for sweeping reform, we propose that the Deeds and Commercial Registries be physically and legally separated and granted some measure of autonomy to facilitate the efficient and expeditious processing of transactions. Approval for that plan was sought from Parliament by the Deeds and Commercial Registries Authority Bill which was approved. This will allow us to create a board and that board will take over an assumed administration of these entities; that board is made up of representatives from the private sector, the bar association – both in Georgetown and in Berbice – and representatives of the Government. The purpose of it is to give autonomy and remove it from Central Government.

We have also been engaged in consultations and discussion with the Union and the staff because we have to transition them from Public Servants, now, to employees of a semiautonomous agency. We also have to have discussion with the Public Service Ministry to ensure that there is smooth transition. We will be soon advertising to recruit a commercial registrar with ample qualifications to head the new legally and physically separated Commercial Registry and to institute many reforms in the efficient and expeditious processing and recording of commercial transactions and we also, in July 2012, were able to appoint a qualified attorney at law to act in the position of Registrar of Deeds. This is after a 30-year lapse. That person is in office and, from all indications, is functioning commendably.

The Land Registry is also scheduled for similar transformational. Like the Deeds Registry, the Land Registry has sub-registries in Berbice and Essequibo and the main registry is in Georgetown. The Land Registry, in its current state, is indeed inadequate in terms of human resource personnel as well as technical and other resources to cope with the work load that it is presented with and we have a bill already drafted in similar terms as with the Deeds Registry in which we will again appoint a board and we will similarly constitute that board and the administration of that unit will be run by that board but, importantly, we are going to resource that unit. We are going to physically remove it from both of its locations, in Georgetown as well as in Berbice. In Berbice, for example, it is occupying very cramped conditions below the High Court of New Amsterdam, sharing facilities with the Deeds Registry; facilities that are wholly inadequate. We are going to remove them and put that entity in a new and separate location.

The same will be done for the Georgetown location. It is currently located at Durban Backlands and we are going to remove it and locate it at the former New Building Society building. That building will also accommodate the Commercial Registry which will be physically disengaged from the Deeds Registry. All of these things are intended to bring greater speed and efficiency to the people of our country.

In relation to the Judiciary I would like to ask my friend on the other side, especially my learned friends, to understand the limitations that the Executive operates under in relation to the Judiciary. The Judiciary, as Members would know, is a constitutionally independent body and all that the Executive can do is present available resources but the judiciary largely self regulatory. So to my learned friend, Mr. Bond, the question that he asked about the appointment of the Registrar or the non-appointment of the Registrar and the promotion of people within that structure, he must know that those appointments reside with the Judicial Service Commission – an independent constitutional body – that has no functional connection with the executive and, therefore, to create the impression that the Executive is responsible for appointments made there is completely and wholly wrong.

My learned friend Mr. Williams spoke about there being a concentration of investments in infrastructure in the justice sector and that is indeed correct but we are not singular in our emphasis. We are developing infrastructure as well as every conceivable area that falls under the administration of justice. Our programme, the Justice Improvement Administration Programme,

is now coming to an end. The programme has been the agenda of the Legal Affairs Ministry over the last three years and it is now winding up. I agree with my friend that that programme was never intended to address all of the problems of the legal sector but what I can say, emphatically, is it has addressed a tremendous and a substantial number of problems. For the backlog cases alone, I am proud to report, significant dents have been made in the backlog. 12,201 were assigned to judges of the High Court between March, 2012, and December, 2012, and 8,880 cases were disposed of. That is a remarkable achievement in adverse circumstances and it makes the judiciary ready for the promulgation of the new High Court rules. That again is a responsibility of the Judiciary, itself, an organ called the Rules Committee presided over by the Chancellor but I have received the commitment that by July of this year those new rules are going to be promulgated and the reason advanced for the delay was the necessity in the opinion of the Judiciary to address the serious backlog of cases first so, as far as possible, when the new rules are promulgated the playing field would have been more level than it would have been before.

The Georgetown Magistrates' Court will be completed, finally, this year. My friend lamented about the lack of air conditioning facilities and I want to report that that building has been extended from the original contract. There has been a variation, hence the delay; variation in two respects: Two additional courts have been added to the structure, bringing the total number of courts to be accommodated in that building to ten and each court will be air conditioned.

My friend, Mr. Bond, spoke about the automated recording system to be implemented and I wish to assure this House that in the final stages of the Justice Improvement Programme that that is scheduled to be addressed. We are going to do a pilot project first at the Court of Appeal, at the Chief Justices Court and in the Commercial Court. We are going to utilise the services of the Parliament for guidance and training – the Hansard Division – and, of course, we are in the process of acquiring the equipment and once that is done, and the pilot is successful, the intention is to replicate that in every single court in our country.

The law books are finally going to be made available – I am told by the consultant – by July of this year. They are at the printer and they will look like this. We have also launched the Law Reports earlier this year. We have 14 volumes from 1975 to 2007; this is the hardcopy and then, of course, the soft copy we have online from 1936 to 2007. We have also spoken to the

publishers and we are going to annually – it is not going to be this marathon break anymore in the process – ensure, every year, that the Law Reports are going to be updated in a timely manner, hence, they are sold at a particular price. The intension is for the project to be economically viable; the same kind of suggestion Mr. Nagamootoo is advancing for the Demerara Harbour Bridge.

We have upgraded libraries at the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Chambers and at the Attorney General (AG) Chambers. The DPP Office has been fully and completely renovated and now the DPP is there and there are accommodations there to accommodate 16 lawyers.

The contract has been awarded already for the construction to begin of a building at New Amsterdam, Main and King Streets. That building will house the DPP Office for the first time in Region 6 and, of course, it will deal with the issues arising in relation to that office in respect of Region 5. Essequibo will have their own shortly, have no doubt about that.

Under the programme we have established civil and criminal justice committees in all three counties – Berbice, Essequibo and Demerara. A secretariat is housed in the Court of Appeal. The appointment of Members of the Committee was done during December, 2012, and it enabled training of these persons during the month of January, 2012, by a firm that helped to design these mechanisms. This is a monitoring unit comprised of various stakeholders and members of the public. The intension is to scrutinise and oversight the functions of the Judiciary.

Of course, we have the paralegal system in the rural communities. That is intended to supplement our legal access to justice because in the interior it is difficult to locate courts at every point where there is an accumulation of population and, therefore, we are dealing with that. We are creating a system that trains people in the interior to preside over the resolution of disputes. [**Mr. Nagamootoo:** ...lay magistrates] My Friend is asking about the lay magistrate. I have asked the same thing. The decision to implement that lies with the Chancellor of the Judiciary, not the Executive. As an Attorney-at-Law, I suggest that you ask him.

There are wide-ranging reforms that are taking place in the justice sector but a lot more has to be done in terms of modernising our laws, in terms of modernising infrastructure, in terms of modernising systems, in terms of digitising our systems, in terms of injecting technological advances in our systems are all initiative that we have to pursue. It will take time and it will

require the support of everyone. It will require the support for Budget 2013 for it to take place. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Members. The Minister having completed, we will take the suspension now for one hour. On return we will be addressed by Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan. Hon. Members, one second. We had proposed to hold a subcommittee meeting at recess but both sides of the House were to have presented redrafted proposals for the estimates. I have not seen them. Had they been exchanged between the two sides, I am suggesting that we hold the meeting at the second suspension and if the proposals are finished let them be shared because to go into a meeting and I will be advised during the break what the proposal is. That is my proposal.

Thank you very much.

Sitting suspended at 4.28 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.51 p.m.

Mr. Ramjattan: I rise on this occasion - I think it is for the 21st occasion - in this National Assembly to speak on this 2013 Budget Debate. It is important that the necessary protocols be exercised. One such being is to thank the Hon. Minister of Finance for coming with a Budget, knowing that there are challenges internationally, locally, regionally, and also thanking the Minister for presenting and laying it in this National Assembly.

I must immediately say that we, in the Alliance For Change (AFC), feel that the Budget would have been even a better one had there been an incorporation of the points that we made and presented to the Minister, some weeks before. As you know, we had started a tripartite consultation process since about mid last year. We had indicated a couple of points that we would like to see in the budget. I will come to that at the appropriate time in my presentation.

I want to make mention before I reach there that it can be encapsulated very well, that is, the debate on Budget 2013, with certain words that the Reverend Dr. Gilbert had stated last year. I was taking a look in the Hansard, at some of the speeches made in 2012, and I thought that this one rings very well. It has to do with what he was saying that “indeed we are where we are and it is better than where we were.” Indeed, the Alliance For Change is not going to deny that we are

better now than where we were, but I want to insist that incorporation what the Opposition had suggested we could have been far better than where we are.

Looking at the *Hansard* from last year, and trying to collate some of the points, which were made, it was the distinct impression that any profound reading of such debates and the discerning of them would reveal that there is something about our politics that is a drag on this Guyanese community! And that drag is keeping us back.

In last year's budget debate, I had mentioned a couple of points, in relation to it not giving the complete picture to the financial status of this country, when there would have been a huge set of moneys in National Industrial Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL)'s private account - public moneys. Huge sets of moneys in certain bank accounts, which the Auditor General had indicated clearly ought to be put into the Consolidated Fund, and even huger sums in the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC)'s account, the Guyana Forestry Commission's account and the Guyana Gold Board account. I made the point, and I want to emphasise it here, that these moneys ought to be placed into the Consolidated Fund because they are public moneys and such ought to be brought to our attention, in this honourable House, for us then to make the allocations. Yes, the Minister has the right, under the Constitution, to prepare and lay the budget. We have every right, however, to indicate where we feel money ought to be cut, and where money ought to be placed, in other areas, so that we can have, what we regard too, that which is beneficial to all and sundry in this country.

A budget, of course, is priorities being placed and positioned. On that score, it is not as if we do not love the people of this country if we were to say that the moneys that were going from NICIL to a Marriott Hotel ought to go to the building of a brand new high-span permanent bridge across the Demerara River. What would have been wrong with that? We are stating that at this stage it is a better priority than a Marriott Hotel. We are saying that we could have allocated certain moneys, even if it is from grants or loans, to start up a State Development Bank through which credit could have been gathered for entrepreneurs. It is our love also for people that encourages us to state that those are proper priorities which ought to be implemented.

That is why we are saying that an accommodation with the Opposition, (which in this case, in this new dispensation, has the majority), is an imperative. We have to listen to each other.

Especially, the Government has to listen to the Opposition. The political posturing that went on with Madam Gail Teixeira when she indicated that we in the Opposition seem not to think, in terms of positive for the people and that we are all bad persons over here, is not necessarily true. We are saying that we ought to make those accommodations to ensure that what collectively, collegially, is best for Guyanese ought then to be the contents of this budget.

Our growth in the early 1990s saw levels unparalleled in this country. Our politicians, if I may say those leading politicians, if they be honest to themselves, cannot compromise that fact. I had watched and I had expected us by virtue of that growth rate of 7% 6 ½% and 8% per annum in those early years and with those directions and trajectory would have caused us to go into the middle bracket income, nearing a Latin American and Caribbean economic heavyweight. We were only, in a sense, seeing a mirage. Why has that not happened, Mr. Speaker? I would want to suggest that it was a problem of our politics, which had got in the way! And that politics is, in a sense, dragging us down.

Hoyte's and then later Cheddi Jagan's initiatives, both former Presidents of this country, against poverty created a hope of high growth and inclusive democracy with a wonderful long-term plan called the National Development Strategy(NDS). There was a transformational shift under President Jagdeo's tenure with the emphasis on Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), not an entirely bad strategy. But it was the front behind which there were a number of domestic localised policies and projects which were - I must be honest - riddled with corruption, nepotism, unaccountability and micromanaging. This bred the inefficiencies, the indiscipline and, what I would like to call, the executive lawlessness which has led to a widening inequality and a smashing of the public's hope.

Yes, there was plenty moneys and there were projects and indeed, as I have indicated in my introduction, we have moved forward. But much of these moneys cannot be said to be reaching the targeted beneficiaries. We must then make the assessment and even conclude, as a result, that the heavily hailed employment and educational schemes have not built the skills people must have now to participate in our economy.

I say these things knowing that we have to be frank, first of all, to ourselves and to the larger community which we represent. It solely has not produced, for example, workers for the

construction of the Marriott Hotel, our educational and employment projects, or has it created employees for an environmentally safe mining industry. Why then is there this dashing of hopes?

Politics in Guyana is deeply fragmented and makes consensus hard to come by. The perceptions and reality, by the community out there, of us politicians are that we are scamps and we are thieves! We have grown tenfold more in terms of unaccountability since the Dr. Jagan era to now. As a result we are seen as deeply inefficient when not seen as incompetent, and we are seen as most self-serving. This reality, for those who stifle their consciences and deny this, has undermined and eroded the immense authority which could have been associated with accountable politicians, who could have brought a servant/exemplar status to our vocation.

This has occurred largely because during the course of the years there was a series of scandals commencing from early in the year 2000 to this day. There were and are sweetheart deals for construction contracts, privatisation arrangements - which once was Bookers' Guyana, today being the big B's Guyana - and the granting of real estate's development rights in exchange for a very profitable consideration, and more recently including the grants of radio licences to, what I would like to say, friends and favourites, and even families, in a most outrageously deceptive manner. This kind of political leadership consequent upon its gaze being on other things has lost sight of its supervision of a whole range of institutions, from the police force to the court systems, our public service, even the army, which now leave these institutions integrity in tatters.

The political leadership of this country, rather than recognising these failures and working to restore moral order, has evaded responsibility. I want to say that Guyana's moral universe is shrinking. Graft and greed have caused it. The political leadership then - to use this word - scapegoats - if I may be permitted to use that term - this dysfunction in the present circumstance, scapegoated to the one-seat majority of the Opposition as if this one-seat Opposition majority is the culprit. We have to damn that fiction, as it were, Mr. Speaker. It is not the majority Opposition that is the cause of this dysfunction! Rather it is the management and governance style of that political leadership, which I talked about, and its subordinate bureaucrats. It is characterised by that management style, that governance style, by huge discretion, by a stifling centralisation and, worse, still staggering secrecy.

I want to give some examples of those huge discretions. I endorsed the view that Government must have discretion. It is a tool and an asset for a Government that must be made available to it. In Guyana, everyday, more and more, the PPP/C Government is never good at justifying its use of this discretion to constituencies affected by such decisions. We have seen that for some time now. Remember President Jagdeo and his grant of duty-free exemptions to Queens Atlantic. What was his justification, when it was then critiqued by an icon of industry, Dr. Yesu Persaud? He was said to be ignorant of the laws of Guyana, but he was vindicated when certain laws were brought to the attention of the President and when indeed we had come here to legalise an illegality. Of course, of more recent vintage is Dr. Luncheon's justification about the grants of radio licences. He justified the discretion to grant radio licences to the present holders on the ground that it is in keeping with a commitment to break a monopoly. Laughable, as you may say, Mr. Speaker, but this brings tears to those who ought to have been granted, and with tears there is a vexation of the spirit. I need not tell you what that could bring.

As regards to centralisation and secrecy, as two components of the management and governance style of this political leadership, I want to say this: the admixture of those two, centralisation and secrecy, has caused me to coin a term in this National Assembly called *control freakism*. We have some control freaks around the place. This term was wrought out of my experience of seeing how this leadership, across there, loves to control everything. Even when I was a Member of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), and sitting at that side, the control of scholarships was a regular thing to be noticed. So, too, the attendance of people at international seminars, the public purse it wanted to control entirely and the Assembly here - everything from apples to zebra. It wants to control the local government process - Hon. Member Mr. Ganga Persaud - the subvention amount, never wanting to enhance decentralisation which could see more people, with more ideas, making even better decisions. This is what brings on a paralysis in our country's governance and management at every turn and at every point and whatever the forum. This is the reason why on the Access of Information Act, the Hon. Member Ms. Gail Teixeira can say - to quote her from the *Stabroek News* - "but soon as the information has finished disseminating there is no urgency to operationalise the Act."

Ms. Teixeira: I did not say that.

Mr. Ramjattan: That is the reason why...

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, I have no problems with what I say. I am not responsible for what the newspaper states that I said.

Mr. Ramjattan: I took what I saw her saying from the television and that was what was effectively reported in the newspapers. If I am wrong I will withdraw it. The trouble is that I heard her effectively saying that.

Mr. Speaker: Members, this is apposite time for me to note that Mr. Nagamootoo had undertaken to provide documentation and he has provided it. It is available. I will leave it with the Clerk.

Mr. Ramjattan: That is the reason also why the Regional Executive Officers (REOs) in certain regions, not controlled by the Government, have such huge difficulties getting their plans and budget approved. Region 8 is a prime example. The Alliance For Change has the chairmanship for that region and, of course, we all know that they proposed - the councillors therein - a certain budget and the REO, we understand, presented something else to the Ministry of Finance. If we are going to talk about local governance and when there are the councillors, by majority, in a democratic process come up and itemise, basically, what they would want for their territory, why then confine them to that which the REO would later come with?

It was until Hon. Member Cathy Hughes, AFC Member, asked the question about radio licences, we never would have known that they were allocated since November, 2011. That was a state secret. It was until the questions were asked and the Hon. Prime Minister had to then produce the answers. It was two days before the then President's term expired he did so. If the question was not asked we might have very well not known the holders and their names. That is why we saw the Cheddi Jagan International Airport expansion only out for the first time... I learnt of it through the *Gleaner* newspaper from Jamaica and then *Kaieteur News* reprinting it here. Even - I think the name is Coffee Day, out of India - the *India Times* had to tell us about the big forestry investment in Guyana by this Indian entrepreneur.

There is so much more that is hidden, which, perforce in the coming days and months, will be fathomed and discerned and unearthed by this one-person majority Opposition. It will be in the interest of this country that we do that job of bringing all these sleight of hand deals to the public fore. As I have said last year, we had as, what I will regard, an excessive financial

irresponsibility through what were found in the NICIL and the GGMC accounts, and all of those other accounts. It is for these reason, too, why the political leadership of the PPP/C seems not to want to have the operationalisation of a public Procurement Commission. The genuine operationalisation of this Procurement Commission will be a scourge of the PPP in this the second decade of the year 2000s, just as the operationalisation of the Auditor General report under the Hoyte's administration, saw it being the scourge of the PNC.

If we the politicians love the people we must love scrutiny and we must learn to live it. We must give the people out there that charge to blow the whistle when they see corruption and cronyism. It is not to do such as was done to that young man, Pablo Singh, at NDIA, when he found certain things were going wrong there and came out with his internal auditors report he was chastised more than anything else. That is wrong. We would never, then, as a result get a culture of wanting to speak out. What are we going to have when we bottle all of these personnel with all of these instructions that the Government would want to see as a content of their report? We are going to have fear being built, and fear in the country, fear in the governance processes, fear in the management processes are not going to be in the interest of this country.

The result of this kind of politics and governance forces Government to maintain a façade of pro poor rhetoric. [Ms. Teixeira: That is why it troubles you.] Yes. It is exemplified in certain statements - such pro poor rhetoric - in the contents of Budget 2013 presented by the Hon. Minister. [Mr. Neendkumar: Tell me where are they?] There are large doses of it as to what and what the poor will benefit from. It also forces this political leadership to do outreaches to disadvantage ethnic groupings for natural political survival [Mr. G. Persaud: You are going wrong, Mr. Ramjattan.] It does. I have seen that. It urges also a *cuss down ad hominem* politics - *buse down*. It is calling people jackasses, calling them, at Rose Hall, Canje ground, fools, and so on. It even forces opportunistically, as is the recent platform of this Government as it appears, a State/Big Business kind of reality.

Ms. Teixeira: The word donkey or the word that the Hon. Member is using "jackass" is not considered a parliamentary word.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is unparliamentarily to refer, in this House to another Member. Mr. Ramjattan is quoting what a Hon. Member was called, outside this House, by someone else. It is quite in order. You are not referring to another Member in here by that term.

Mr. Ramjattan: Look, it is here, what the President said about one of his colleagues of over 40 years. I support what is good for the *Guyana Chronicle* is also good to be brought here.

This association then creates and demands, a certain raw political survivorship of the elite. We welcome an admixture of the state and the market, but we do not want to see, as Dr. Jagan would have wanted not to see, the state cuddling with certain big Bs only. We have to create the condition that all and sundry must have equal opportunity and justified criteria for owning lands, for owning radio licences, for getting contracts, for getting other things, and state resources.

6.21 p.m.

A yawning inequality can be the consequence of misapplied admixture of state intervention and the role of the market. This inequality then breeds political polarisation; it breeds mistrust; it breeds resentment; it breeds the accumulation, on the one side, of the haves and, on the other, the have-nots. There is, also, a distortion of the democratic process, the democratic system, in which money increasingly confers the political voice and power. I am seeing that happening. The big boys in this country are becoming predominant.

These pointers which I am addressing, largely come from an article that I read from a very prominent politician out of Latin America, Oscar Arias, that this budget is going to have troubles because our politics have troubles. [*Interruption*] It is based on the obscene gesticulation just now and it will not bring that good politics that we want in this Parliament, so as to ensure a peaceful deliberation here. He said it in an article in the *Foreign Affairs*, January/February of 2011. It is so very much applicable to what we are and what is happening here. It is the opening essay edition of the *Foreign Affairs* and he is talking about Latin American and Caribbean politicians here. This is what he sated at page 5:

“Once elected they interpreted their mandates as *carte blanche* to do whatever they wanted, including prosecuting their opponents, shackling the media and trying to twist the system so as to stay in power at all cost. Too many of their country’s citizens

meanwhile are content to allow these leaders to proceed, perhaps seeing their messianism and demagoguery as the exit of the prevailing regional labyrinth of underdevelopment.”

Those are great words from a great man, Oscar Arias. Latin America, he said, has vastly more “controllers than entrepreneurs.” He went on to say a lot more about how we are the ones who... we are even tight to hold onto pain and sufferings rather than go forth, sometimes, not being very certain. It generates not only anxiety, but paralysis, that kind of management and governance style.

He even quoted a passage from another very important former President in the region, *Oswaldo Hurtado*, recently, when he said:

“Latin Americans do not trust legal institutions and actors, whether Government courts or private lawyers. In deed the deep-rooted centuries old custom of flouting the law has been a more powerful influence in the continent of the countless laws passed over the centuries to regulate economic, social and political relations. Latin American legislatures have probably passed more laws over the past 175 years in than their counterparts anywhere in the planet yet have never so many laws be ignored by so many, for so long.”

The thing captures exactly what we have here in Guyana, and we can talk all we want. We can talk about we can have great budgets but if we at this level of the politics, and the culture, and the norms of the community, cannot have a handle on how we are to govern ourselves, how we are to see that there is greater citizenship by participation from the community around us, we are not going to have any progress made.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time has elapsed.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put, and agreed.

Mr. Ramjattan: We want to help the private sector and we did, as part and parcel of our deliberations and even consultations with it, we came up with a comparison of the taxes in relation to other Caribbean countries and Guyana. The scenario here is painted in which Guyana

is probably the most taxed country in the English speaking Caribbean. Our rates are over 10 and 5% and this tax comparison, I have given to the press, in a press conference that we held, and had urged the Minister of Finance to let us in as to what is happening to the tax committee - the Tax Review Committee. We now understand that all that was said last year that “Hold on, Mr. Ramjattan and Mr. Granger, and the rest of our team, we are going to ensure that this committee will come up with some recommendations.” Lo and behold! It has probably met, but there is nothing which has been done in relation to that Tax Committee.

That kind of tax reduction is going to ensure..., as we have been saying when compared against Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica. Indeed, a logical dispassionate arrangement can lead to one thinking that there might very well be a reduction in the amount of taxes collected. But what we have been told by the business community is that once taxes are reduced taxpayers will pay. We have to live with that reality, as the economist will say, that when it is too high a number of the entrepreneurs and businessmen start hiding - evasion and avoidance. They have been pleading for reduction of corporate taxes and we, in the Alliance For Change, also have been pleading for a reduction of the Value Added Tax. We were, last year, being told, in minute detail, that reduction of Value Added Tax was not going to help poor people. The thing is relative; it will help poor people. The poor people, by the way, as we go about this country, all the way, will ask, “Mr. Ramjattan, Mr. Nagamootoo, when you all will bring down that tax?” It is all over the place. Then I tell them - that is why I generally walk with the arguments of the Minister of Finance to places where I go - that this is what the Minister of Finance said: “It is the rich people who are going to benefit more that *al yo*, so because the rich people are going to benefit more that *al yo*, we do not want you all to get that little respite.”

It is an argument that I find rather specious; I find rather illogical, but that is the argument. I am urging that there be, as quickly, the reconvening of a new committee, if that has to be, so that we can have analysis of our taxes. Just as when there were the actuaries coming in to see what disaster Dr. Roger Luncheon’s chairmanship and other board members caused to the National Insurance Scheme (NIS), to the extent now that it is going bankrupt or will soon go bankrupt. That is hard earned moneys but, of course, we will come to the Assembly, we might very well ask for a bail out. I think that is one of the propositions.

In addition, I want to make mention of certain things that we, in the Alliance For Change, had proposed as part of our ideas in the budget. I had them here, somewhere. They had to do with the fact that we are concerned about the people's welfare. We had made a ten-point plan in relation to what we would like to see in the budget. I notice that when it is being stated that we do not care for the people, I want it to be understood that when we ask for public servants increases, we care for the public servants; when we ask for a reduction of Value Added Tax, we care. It is not that we do not have this country at heart.

When we ask for the public Procurement Commission to be established, we care. We want cronies and corruption to come to an end and even if there is none, the public Procurement Commission will come here and say so and the kudos will be held for the benefit of the Government. It will be a proud day when the Procurement Commission comes and says: "Mr. Ramjattan, what you were alleging were all false." I will stand up and say... **[Mr. G. Persaud: We do not need a commission.]** Of course, we need a commission. That is why we are saying there has been a plethora of constitutional breaches because it is there in the Constitution and it has not been operationalised.

There is supposed to be an Ombudsman and we cannot name one for the last five or six years. There is supposed to be a Public Service Appellate Tribunal. Have the members of the Public Service Appellate Tribunal been named? No. We have a Constitution full of fancy institutions for the scrutiny and for the benefit of workers and public servants and procurement contracts, and what do we have? None is being established to the extent that it could start doing its work. I want to say that the ultimate reason is because this Government talks scrutiny but does not walk that talk.

We had asked for certain other things, certain vehicles duties and taxes to be reduced, in keeping with the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), that is, electric cars, and so, when they will start coming into the country. We talk about an increase to the \$15,000 for the old age pensioners. We love the people too just like the Government. The Government must not get the impression that when we present to it that which we would like to see, it is about a smashing of the workers and the proletariat and all the middle classes. No! The impression is given as if we are the dragons, as if we are the bad Johns of the place.

When we said that we would like, first of all, now, to make whatever alterations and amendments to the budget, understand that in the context that we are thinking of the people out there. No, said the other side - absolutely no. They Members said that we want to do damage to the workers of this country. That is the last intent we would have ever had. As a matter of fact, it is not a part and parcel at all.

The reconfiguration of this 2013 Budget, which could have occurred during a more sincere dialogue process, is now not there. We have to do what we have to do to ensure that that Government across the floor comes to its senses. When it starts tighten up we are going to start lighten up.

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Hinds: I join my colleagues in commending and congratulating the Hon. Minister of Finance and his team of public servants in the Ministry of Finance, and indeed all public servants all across the Government, in taking part in and crafting this year's budget and the series of budgets which will follow.

In paragraph 1.7 of his budget speech the Minister of Finance related... I will quote the whole paragraph as I find it germane and an embodiment of our PPP and PPP/C approach:

“Mr. Speaker, bolstered by our unswerving commitment to task, our Government ensured the preservation of a policy environment that remained conducive to economic growth and social development throughout 2012. The result was a seventh consecutive year of real growth in our economy and associated strong macroeconomic performance, continued diversification of the productive sector, substantial progress on catalytic infrastructural projects, further strengthening of our social services, and visible improvements in our regulatory and institutional environment.”

I think that paragraph is a very sound one and it states a lot. Our commitment to the task preserving a policy environment that remains conducive to economic growth and social development does not just happen, it needs the right circumstances to bring it about. The result was a seventh consecutive year of real growth in our economy, associated with strong macroeconomic performance. I know that many people get upset with that term and our focus on

macroeconomic performance, but with the loss of macroeconomic performance, inflation, which we had throughout, from about soon after independence right through to the 1990s, was what made beggars and poor people of a lot of public servants, people who worked for money wages. That was what caused many of them in their old age to be receiving pensions of \$300 per month.

There was the focus on "...the continued diversification of the productive sector, substantial progress on catalytic infrastructural projects, further strengthening of our social services, and visible improvements...", not perfection, but improvements, visible, real improvements "...in our regulatory and institutional environment." I think that more or less puts it all, for me, in a nutshell.

All of us, Guyanese, can and should feel some satisfaction and sense of reward in that our work has brought us a seven successive year of real growth. It is not that we have not had years of growth before. We have had, but we have been fluctuating. Seven consecutive years of growth emanates what is happening globally in our region, and even locally, should grab our attention. As it was said that we have been doing something right and something good, and that we might be well getting on track to realise the dreams of our present and past generations.

Growth and development, a steadily more prosperous living and comfortable life becoming a modern state is what we, Guyanese, have been longing for and dreaming for, but how do we achieve that? What can we learn from the history of the already developed countries? It has been said many times, and it is true, that the growth and development, for which we worked to afford ourselves a more prosperous and comfortable living, is a process, not an event. It is not a process of a year or two, but a process of many decades.

The two Hon. Members sitting across the aisle from me, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, (Ret'd) Brigadier David Granger and the Hon. Member Dr. Rupert Roopnarine, like me, attended secondary school before independence and sat the English examinations. We took the history course of the then O'level, General Certificate of Education (GCE) exams, modern Britain. It made a profound impression on me, as it was related to how Britain was transformed into modern Britain from about the year 1700 onto about the 1950. It covered that period. I was impressed not only because of the great teacher we had, Mr. Robert 'Bobby' Moore, but because

of some corresponding situations which I could have sensed between Britain in 1700 and my rural life in the countryside in Mahaicony in the 1950s.

Animal power, oxen, *daheen* and bow were still common amongst us as they were in Britain in 1700. At first, individual properties in the villages of eastern Mahaicony were not fenced and there were families without any land of their own who reared animals, let loose to graze on the common pasture. I was around then in the 1950s when some persons began fencing their lands. Maybe, they got some money then and they had begun to fence their lands. It broke up the common pasture. Much of the same thing was happening in England in 1700 and much the same effects that was happening at that time, during the period of enclosure.

Today, in many places all across Guyana, as we hear arguments between livestock rearers and farmers, we should recognise that the resolving of some of the issues of enclosures is still with us, but here I saw a parallel in some of the things that were happening in Guyana in 1950 which were occurring in Britain in 1700.

I might have been left with the impression that the process of modernisation was one of 250 years or more, but then in time we recognised the Asian tigers, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and very noticeably, more recently, China and India, transforming themselves in a major way in about 50 or 60 years.

My honourable colleagues, Mr. Granger and Dr. Roopnarine, could hardly differ with me that as youths leaving high schools, in the first half of the 1960s, we would have considered, and would have considered ourselves, Guyana alongside, if not ahead, of Malaysia, Singapore, India, as taken as a whole, and China. We who were 20 years old youth then looked forward to the coming independence and the rapid modernisation. Things did not turn out the way my generation hoped. It is not the case that we did not worked; we did not dream; we did not applied ourselves. I would not argue that any of us was not well intended. Those things do not make the difference. Well intention, good intention, is okay.

There is the history of our country's growth and development over the years, from the late 1950s to today and I would argue, with the greatest of respect for the efforts of everyone, that the records would show that steady growth and development have been more likely when the PPP and the PPP/C were and is in office. In the periods of 1957 and 1964 and in the period since

1992 the PPP and the PPP/C have been the better servants, the better stewards, of the economy bringing material benefit to all the people of Guyana. That is historical facts.

It is with such a background that I support our Budget 2013 hoping that Guyana will this time around stay on the course of steady increase in growth and development so that the young people, the 20 years olds of today, the youths of today, in their lifetime, in 50 or 60 years from now, will find the work of all of us blessed with Guyana catching up with and drawing abreast of the already developed countries. My hope is that the 20 years old youths of today will see Guyana becoming a modern developed State. It would not happen just so, it will be the product of the work of our hearts and hands and heads.

Growth and development do not come smoothly, but being full of change and transformation they are also full of potential for conflict; the greater the rate of growth and development the greater the potential for conflict. More so, in a country in which people are thrown together, whose forefathers were thrown together, as ours were. I am ready to argue, again, with the greatest of respect for other opinion that the historical records of the formation of the Public Accounts Committee, the PPP critical support to Mr. Burnham and the PNC, the formation of the PPP/C in 1990 would have shown that our party has always been conscious of how our fore parents were thrown together and the lengths to which we need to go to work for harmony and to avoid violent conflict breaking out at every term. That harmony has been prevailing for more of our history is testament to the efforts made on all sides by all our people to achieve and maintain harmony.

We have been aware too that the growth and development often involve moving from one stage to another stage, from one type of organisation to another. The challenge is not to move too early nor too late. We are aware that all are involved and that there is much for us to learn. Our annual budget is crafted with a sense of being and annual review of our journey to better days, better times not only plotting the path forward, but also creating that path. This has been how our budgets have been crafted; continually aware of needs, dangers and opportunities all around and most of all I think the thing that the PPP and the PPP/C has been faithful to was the need for financial discipline and it an issue that we questioned when we hear the proposals for reduction in taxes and at the same time increases in benefits – financial disciplines.

I recall the last speaker before me talking about people who were made out to be bad Johns. I think our history would show that because of our concern and commitment to financial discipline, we have been made out to be the bad Johns. It is The Government Members who have been made out to be the bad Johns - the people who do not want to give the pensioners \$15,000; the people who do not want to give public servants 10% and more than 15% increase; the people who do not want to do this; the people who do not want to cut the Value Added Tax (VAT). We are made out to be the bad Johns.

6.51 p.m.

It calls for a great sense of purpose and commitment to a country to persevere in the discipline that has brought this seven-year period of successive growth.

Our sense of responsibility as the country's stewards in office in service to the people of Guyana, coupled with our economic history engender a strong sense of earnest responsibility and I would even dare say maybe it makes it difficult for us to rush into, maybe, accepting many of the proposals that are put before us.

There has been much talk about the need for not just shared governance, but even shared government. The President, it has been suggested, should have looked around and made a Cabinet of persons from all parties. This is certainly appealing. It is certainly an ideal. Who could speak out against it? Who may dare to speak out against it? No doubt these calls were well intended, but there are major dangers and unanswered questions in this sort of shared government. Indeed, Sir, the late President Hoyte, I think, argued quite profoundly against shared government before he eventually gave in to the opposite arguments in the People's National Congress (PNC). It is not for me now to go into them, but we can go back and check them in the media of the day and the discussions of the day.

Shared governance, shared responsibility, is not beyond us who offered critical support to Mr. Burnham and the PNC, even as opposed to critical exposure at a time when we of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) were being cheated and abused...but also a time when we put Guyana first. We put Guyana before that.

We do not think shared governance in the sense of shared Ministries is the critical thing for Guyana. It is not the thing for Guyana and not the critical thing. There are real differences in views, in approaches, and in results among our different parties. I spoke just now to one, the difficulties with financial discipline. That is a big difference among our parties. There are others. We, as I said, from time to time, are more of the rural type. There have been many stories, Aesop's fables and so on, about the difference between the country mouse and the city mouse. I think that we of the PPP/C, if I may be bold to say so, have much more correlation with us and the behaviour of the country mouse than with the city mouse. We are more practical and down to earth, maybe even, I would say, Sir, people with their feet in the mud. So there are real differences among our parties.

Democracy is promised on the working out of different views or working in the presence of different views even as these views ever arise, particularly as we grow and develop. We see as more important, indeed as a first step, the development of trust, an atmosphere in which we all can live under the Guyana umbrella, aware of our differences, yet extending and accepting hands of assistance from each other and ready to learn from and teach each other. We of the PPP/C are afraid that shared government may just mean a shifting of the contentions and abuse in this House to the Cabinet room. Just imagine a Cabinet that is performing in the same way or with the same relations as we have been having here in this House.

I also think that a forcing of shared government would easily return us to the 1950s when, with our differences, some explicit and some implicit, some obvious and some unrecognised, there would likely occur again, situations and events which let loose feelings of betrayal, ungratefulness and such like.

For the sake of 20-year olds of today, we do not want a repeat of that history. The risk is still too great. I join a colleague on this side who spoke before me in tabling again and putting before us again our proposals for building trust for political co-operation, which we tabled in 2003. We think that that is the way forward.

Much has been said about our PPP/C reluctance, even aversion to engage and trust. We of the PPP and the PPP/C have been burnt. Even during the last Budget, in the engagement to begin a

reform of the provision of electricity in Linden, we have been burnt. That was a pretty painful, but limited experience.

A more pervading, painful experience was referred to recently by one of our country's socio-political commentators, Dr. Henry Jeffrey, in his article "Future notes" of Wednesday, 3rd April, in the *Seabrook News*. He referred to the agreement to use national Identification (ID) cards for identification in our 1997 Elections and the subsequent ruling of that Election as null and void without protests from the other parties in that agreement. Allow me to quote from a paragraph and a half of Dr. Jeffrey's article, as it is relevant to a point made by Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge in his presentation on last Tuesday, 2nd April. Maybe let me first go to Mr. Greenidge's statement from this unofficial transcript which I have received. Mr. Greenidge, we may recall, said words to the effect, pretty early in his presentation:

"...those studies included one prepared by the World Bank and published in 2003 argued (amongst other things) that the declines in Guyana's economic growth between 1998 and 2004 were partly due to the less favourable political and institutional environment after 1997."

You see, we had that agreement during the 1997 Elections. Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members, you would recall the events running up to the Elections at the end of 1997 and the events thereafter.

Let us now go to "Future notes" of political scientist and commentator, Dr. Henry Jeffrey, which also speaks to the Elections of 1997 and the following years. I quote:

"Before the 1997 Elections, the two parties agreed that voters could use their normal ID cards to cast their ballots. Yet after the Elections the PNC moved to the Courts claiming that the Elections were rigged and thus null and void. The Court concluded that the Elections were not rigged, but vitiated Ms. Jagan's presidency on the ground that it was illegal for the parties to have colluded in requiring voters to have to show their normal ID cards before casting their ballots.

If anything, this decision gave greater fillip to the PNC protest and after the 2001 Elections, which it clearly lost, the party took to the streets again and boycotted Parliament."

What is wrong with that? This is someone who is calling for shared ministers from all parties in a Cabinet when this sort of behaviour has not been cleared. We have not heard a word about it. The sheet has to be cleared before we could move forward.

I would argue too that just like how the Court said that that year the PPP and the PNC colluded, I would say that there is danger also in coming together in a Cabinet of Ministers. We could find ourselves being guilty of collusion just the same as then.

These were the circumstances of our country's fluctuating GDP performance from 1997 to about 2004. I would say, let us recall what was happening. Let us recall all the marches, making Guyana ungovernable and fire and more fire. That was the situation. That was the situation in which we had some years of growth and some years of no growth.

It was in those circumstances, in the face of contrived mayhem, that we of the PPP/C agreed to hold elections early, two years early in 2001, a sacrifice. So, when people talk about who has sacrificed and who loves Guyana and has made sacrifices, it is the PPP/C who historically has been making the sacrifices. We have been making the sacrifices. This seven-year period of steady growth from 2006 is a reward and gift, not only to us of the PPP/C, but to all of us Guyanese. It is a reward for us, keeping Guyana together and accepting a two year cut. We have made sacrifices in all areas.

I would say that we are not going to not share this sacrifice and take it all for ourselves. We know that that the other people have their feelings too. This is what I pointed out, that we cannot just run and get into a government of all the parties. It is that we have to take it step by step and get back to our proposal of creating trust for political cooperation. That is what we have to get. We have to have some instances where the other side delivers on its commitments too. We have to have enough instances. We have to persuade our supporters that we can get into agreements with the people on the other side.

We have all paid greatly to get this seven-year run of continuous growth. We must cherish it and build on it.

If, Mr. Speaker, there are to be any fares or claims by any Guyanese group that others have sought to dominate them, no one has better grounds to put such a case than we of the PPP and

the PPP/C. We are not complaining. We have not been daunted. We have not been losing time in complaining. We have been continuing to work as best as we could to steer our country through and away from those troubled and troubling waters. We have not sought to evade awareness of our social, ethnic and political challenges, but we have put our position paper, 'Creating Trust for Political Corporation'. Some may say that we are being cautious and we are not daring enough. Perhaps, that is how we, the PPP and the PPP/C, are - cautious, careful and concerned people.

Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members, our Budget is crafted pertained to studies of sustainable progress, a step-by-step approach to our dreams. Our annual Budgets enable our next steps on the decades-long journey to a developed state. So, we have here the next steps in a continuing journey year to year.

I assure the Hon. Member, Mr. Carl Greenidge, that there has been nothing like a lack of attention to poverty alleviation, nor has the so-called National Competitiveness Strategy, as Mr. Greenidge puts it, taken emphasis away from issues of poverty alleviation. This comment shows that a lot of our people are still ambiguous. They have not taken the time to resolve contradictions or they have not accepted contradictions. He is putting opposite each other the attention to poverty and poverty alleviation and this so-called National Competitiveness Strategy. The aim in life is that one has to learn to live with his or her contradictions, the different pressures all around. In fact, maybe from our schooling back in those days, we learned that things are held fairly stable with many competing forces on it, not just one or two. That is something that I think we of the PPP and the PPP/C have always been able to handle better, to live with the various contradictions that we find in life.

The Hon. Member should, however, be familiar with the story of giving a poor man a fish and feed him for today, but teach him to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. In this Budget, we are seeking to do both. We are doing both within our present means, providing assistance today and teaching and facilitating successful competitive, self-sustaining livelihood in the future. We are doing both, giving a fish and teaching how to fish. How are poor people to overcome poverty and step onto the ladder of rising prosperity? Poverty is to be overcome by creating opportunities, opening doors and equipping the poor to be working and working ever more productively. That is what we are doing. That is what we are doing in the various measures in our Budgets. This is the consistent overarching principle running through our Budgets and all

that we do. That is the way people are set free and empowered. You leaders of APNU and the AFC must encourage the people who look to you for leadership to participate, not to stand on the sideline, but to put their hands, hearts and heads to any work that comes their way today until they find the work they want. That is what we all do when we go to North America. We put our hands, our hearts and our heads to whatever work we could find until the day we could find the work we want.

We of the PPP/C are proud and, I think, all of us Guyanese are proud of and celebrate our per capita GDP that is today US\$3,148 in nominal terms, compared with less than US\$300 in 1992. That is good news, but, at the same time, we are aware that a number of our neighbours around us are up to US\$10,000 and developed countries are up to US\$30,000 and \$50,000. We have graduated out of the least developed countries and *Heavily Indebted Poor Countries* (HIPC) and we should all note that less grants and soft money now come our way.

We have not abandoned the poor programmes as Mr. Greenidge accuses us of, which the funding agency started. We have been aware that growth and development do not come smoothly. The saying is that there are always winners and losers, some who happen to be in the right positions are swept up by the rising tide before others. A widening spread in standard of living is a real danger of growth and development. We have continued the poverty amelioration programmes, some virtually unchanged and others with adaptation. I hope I am correct about the School Feeding Programme, the Uniforms Assistance Programme and such like.

Hon Member Mr. Greenidge referred to a number of things which were tabled during the discussions we had which surrounded the Budget last year. Allow me to address some of them. Hon. Member Greenidge's assertion that the Value-Added Tax (VAT) is a regressive tax that hits the poor most heavily might have been applicable if we had implemented VAT in its pure form as we were being pressed to do. I was there also when the pressure was coming on from the consultants and all the institutions to have a pure form of VAT. We refused. Mr. Greenidge might be right were there not the basic items zero-rated and exempted freed from VAT. The meeting spoke about, and we have opened to, extending the list of basic items. We note some people who argued, too, about from time to time even the poor may want to splurge once or twice or year and that we should take VAT off of those things so that the poor's once or twice a year splurge...but which better off citizens consume dozens of times a year. Here is where

discipline and maybe looking like a Bad John comes in, because we are holding to the position that if the poor splurges once or twice per year, they will have to step up and pay the VAT on those items. Other people are using those items consistently, maybe dozens of times per year. That is the kind of differences that comes up in our approaches and our programmes and what we do.

We maintain that lowering the VAT rate the way we have implemented VAT would be to the benefit of our better off fellow citizens. We would have nothing against our better off fellow citizens. We just think that we are all together and those who have a bit more have a right to put a bit more in the pot and take out a bit less than others. It is not something to condemn them or harm them or chastise them for. It is just calling on them to step up to the plate and be a Guyanese, contributing to others.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge, spent a lot of time on the constitutional bodies, the way the budgets are to be set and the procedures of financing. Hon. Member Greenidge has demanded that these Estimates come to us differently and be differently presented. I would repeat, as we have been maintaining, and I could not improve on the Minister of Finance here, that the Estimates are being presented as they have been presented traditionally. When discretions were tabled in the Budget discussions last year, the Government side pointed to the constitutional amendments which would be required, but more so I think this matter may need some full consideration.

Over the year, there have been presentations which show a range of interpretations and expectations about how the quantities of money for the constitutional bodies will be set. There is the argument, and it may be an extreme one, that the head of the constitutional body should be free to set a figure in his deliberate judgement and the Minister of Finance would receive it, having no standing to question that figure.

I think, and I would admit, that Hon. Member Ramjattan has argued at times that the heads of those constitutional bodies will be reasonable persons and would not set outlandish or unreasonable figures for the Minister of Finance to provide. I should let Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan know that even amongst us Ministers and agency heads are under pressures to be seen to be performing and with a desire to meet evident needs of our people have started with figures

two to five times what they eventually could be allocated. So here we have that situation even amongst us, the Cabinet, where people start off with figures that call for funding that could be five times what they could eventually be granted. I would not take it as just reasonableness. In fact, reasonableness is what often causes our problem. We agree that it would be reasonable to maybe double all incomes across Guyana. It would be reasonable and it would be desirable, but it would set us back on the same path as we were after Independence.

The budget process is one of managing scarce resources, making hard and difficult choices with what we have available. I do believe that one cannot separate the setting of budget figures and setting quantities of money to be spent or to be had from the responsibility of raising revenue. That is almost a recipe for what might be or what certainly would appear to be irresponsibility, not having both things. If I only had to call for money and it comes, I do not develop the sense of responsibility of getting the money and working for it or taking the responsibility for raising the revenue.

We may be facing a conundrum in what is written in the Constitution but our minds are not closed. For example, an arrangement where the Minister of Finance has no say in the figures that may be demanded of him, does that not infringe on his constitutional role of responsibility for the nation's financing? Does it not also infringe on that side? We may be facing a conundrum but our minds are not closed. Our handling of the similar issue with respect to the Office of the Auditor General was pointed to in those discussions as indicative of an approach in considering the questions of these constitutional bodies and how we may evolve a different approach if required, if desired and if we think it would really be an improvement to us.

However, I want to acknowledge that the Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge, acknowledged that we have arranged and presented this year the funding of the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU) and State Planning Secretariat differently and presumably more to his approval. It is evidenced that his criticism and other criticisms have not been falling on deaf ears; we put into effect those we can concur with in a timely way.

Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members, I feel I need to speak to another large area of Hon. Member Greenidge's presentation and also Hon. Member Ramjattan's presentation; he just spoke before

me. That of Privatisation Unit (PU) of the National Industrial & Commercial Investments Ltd. (NICIL) and other activities which are termed off budget financing...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, just by way of enquiry, we are relaxing the rules for you, of course, but can you give an indication as to...?

Mr. Hinds: How much time do I have?

Mr. Speaker: The rules are relaxed for you, but we may wish to consider going into the recess at 7.30 p.m., but I just thought I would get a sense from you.

Mr. Hinds: Maybe I will need 25 minutes. I may need a bit more time, Sir. I will speed up.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

7.21 p.m.

Mr. Hinds: Speaking to PU/NICIL, Sir, we must position PU/NICIL against the background that we, Guyanese, and Guyana have come from, the position where the Government took the not so commanding heights of our economies and 85% of all economic activities were in the hands of the Government. That is where we have come from. We of the PPP/C still see a role for Government in the economy, particularly in a country like Guyana at this stage of its development. It is nothing like the holding and owning of enterprises responsible for 85% of our economic activity, but a role to influence and take a lead in key areas. Some people say that the Civics are not PPP but some people say that the Civics, maybe, are more PPP than the PPP. I might want to hold to the second view if I had to choose one of them. I want to identify that I encouraged and supported the combination of the Privatisation Unit (PU) and National Industrial & Commercial Investments Ltd. (NICIL) and that combination becoming the lead agency for the Government in any desired investment or lead investment taking a lead in our economy. We maintain that no laws are being broken, neither in the operation of NICIL nor in any of the so-called off budget transactions. There is auditing by the Auditor General's Office and, most of all, we, Guyanese, are better off having PU/NICIL to act in our economy.

On the Berbice River Bridge and on the Demerara Harbour Bridge (DHB), In my drafting I had put together – and I want to acknowledge that I am only following in the footsteps of Hon.

Member Moses Nagamootoo in making the connection between the two... Many persons have called for this reduction in tolls. I would like to say that the Government has retained a ferry service from Rosignol to New Amsterdam to facilitate those pedestrians whose destination is New Amsterdam and, maybe, to provide the same sort of costing to them as before. I am sure that everyone who uses the Berbice River Bridge is better off for having it and paying the tolls when one thinks of the long delays and uncertainties of the old ferry crossing. Lots of us called for, "Oh, Lord, when are we going to get the bridge? When are we going to get to leave this ferry?" I would be bold enough to say – maybe a bit of what Hon. Member Moses Nagamootoo has already, at least, implied – that it is not the high tolls of the Berbice River Bridge that is the problem, but it is the low, highly subsidised, unsustainable tolls of the Demerara Harbour Bridge.

We should recognise that history and circumstances at times determine how various things end up. The Demerara Harbour Bridge has ended up with a low toll and the Berbice River Bridge has ended up with a toll that is better than before. When taken overall, it is better to have the Berbice River Bridge but it is a higher toll than the Demerara Harbour Bridge. That is how things have turned out, but that is not the end. We have been told, during this debate, that the DHB may be worn out in six years' time and we need to urgently start construction of a supporting overhead bridge. Bearing in mind our emergence from the Least Developed Countries (LDC) to More Developed Country (MDC), the reduction in grants and soft money, we most probably will be looking to do something as in the case of the Berbice River Bridge – a public/private partnership in the pattern of the Berbice River Bridge.

More than that, my mother used to say, "Do not get carried away too much with other people's good luck. You do not know how things will turn out." Right now, I presume that many people who use the Demerara Harbour Bridge, if they can have a magic wand to wave and tomorrow they can get the Bridge and all the traffic arrangement can be made so that they would not get tied up for an hour or two and have to leave early to cross over... I presume that if we could wave a magic wand and offer it to them tomorrow, they probably would say, "Yes, let us have it." So, things keep evolving and, particularly, with steady growth and development, it will keep evolving.

The Marriott Hotel: we have talked about the Marriott Hotel. I find something good, actually, in the protests that we have had about the Marriott Hotel being built at the site and not a Guyanese

is working there. I find something good in that, in that persons want to be a part of something happening in our society. Persons used to protest before that it should not happen and it should be stopped and so on, but they have moved on and that is a good thing. I am happy about that.

Again, we, of the PPP/C, maybe, have to take the whole thing into consideration. We would like to be there, standing up and directing the building of the Marriott Hotel. But let us look at what is happening, too, in our job market. There are jobs that go a begging and all of us have had experiences of poor workmanship, reports of widely variable quality of work and delivery of work. These are things. If we are going to be putting up a Marriott Hotel where the issue is the hotel where Guyanese would find work and there would be *Guyanisation* programmes after, that is what we want, a hotel built in good time and within budget and, indeed, within the lowest possible budget.

I look for the day. I want to nurture that feeling of Guyanese who want to be good workers to the world. Indeed, it reminds me of the slogan that was in Singapore back in the 1980s. Singapore had a slogan that said, “Let us Singapore people provide the world with a German quality workforce at two-thirds the price.” That is the principle that I would like us Guyanese to take up and, hopefully, with this seven years behind us, we can get going on a road like Singapore.

I want to speak to the Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) because it has been said that it is a “black hole”. I have put together some papers here – and this is one of the difficulties in running companies from enterprises in Parliament – and I would like to go through quickly a set of sheets. The big facts about GPL are: one, the Government has been keeping the electricity tariffs below the economic price, and this has been something that has been happening since in the 1970s. Indeed, this is one of the things that the institutions – the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) – were probably beating the PNC on its head about in the 1970s/1980s and they also beat us on the head about it, giving us all of the reasons why subsidising electricity is a no-no. The rich people use more electricity, so why subsidise it? They are being subsidised more than the poor people. That is one argument that cannot be easily contested. But the “black hole” comes about because if you look on the first page, you would see that there are foregone revenues of billions of dollars most years and over the period 2003 - 2013, it totals \$34.3 billion but, as is allowed in the arrangements, we took back some of it in 2010/2011 when oil prices fell. We took back some of what had been foregone and kept prices the same - stabilisation of prices.

The net effect is that over the period 2003 – 2013, there has been a foregone revenue of \$27.9 billion and this not savings. This is money that the company needs to do its operation. This is money that largely has to be met some other way other than through the tariffs. This “black hole” is really the subsidising of electricity prices to the consumers of GPL – to all of us in Guyana. This is what the “black hole” is. We are the “black hole”.

The second big problem with GPL is this culture which, hitherto, has accepted endeavours of our people to obtain electricity and pay for less than they take, stealing electricity to put it barefacedly and boldly. When one looks at the numbers, they seem to work out to maybe one in every six of us customers of GPL in all geographical areas, religions, races, thinking that GPL electricity is a good target and candidate for stealing form. This is the big problem.

In June 2011, the Caribbean Electric Utility Services Corporation (CARILEC) published tariffs across the region. When you look at these figures, you will realise that most governments do some subsidising or have some special situation. In the residential case, Guyana is fourth up from the lowest. We would admit that we have had, traditionally, a significant cross subsidy to the lower quantity customer end and so, correspondingly, our prices are higher at the large consumer end. If one looked at a chart for industry and large commercial, one will probably find that we are more to the middle than towards the lower end.

The important thing to note is that at the upper end, we doubt that anybody takes taxes and money with withdrawals from the electricity. Up at the upper end, there are prices for electricity in the order of \$90 - \$100 per kilowatt hour (kWh) and those probably are the costs being recovered.

We should review our position that GPL is a “black hole”. It is we who are the “black hole”. We should review our position that GPL is a big, inefficient place and our prices are higher than other prices in the Caribbean. We should review those positions because we do not progress unless we face up to things squarely, honestly and earnestly. We cannot correct if we hide from the facts. Those are the facts. There are some other charts but time presses and so we would not look at them.

I would like to say, too, in the case of the last page which deals with something that I picked up, because it came out recently, on fuel prices, Guyana Oil Company (GUYOIL) is in this. We have

maintained GUYOIL as a Government owned company so that it gives us a mechanism of interacting in the market. We have a price that is on the lower side but not very low. If it were too low, the other private sector companies may well be in a position to argue that we are subsidising against them, making it impossible for them. It is level with the first six, or so, other countries.

I hope that Hon. Members would take these presentations made here to heart.

We all know much about the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project. We are working to get the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project going. How do we resolve our desire for lower cost electricity and the fact, I hope we would accept, is that what we are doing now with GPL is pretty close to the best that could be done? How do we resolve that contradiction? We persevere in trying to get the Project going, which has a promise of lowering generation cost by about half, from about 26 cents a kilowatt hour to about 12 cents a kilowatt hour.

I have said this before but in GPL there is this project which is going to upgrade the transmission system. By the end of the year, the Berbice and Demerara systems should be interconnected. There should be about seven new substations in North Ruimveldt, Golden Grove on the East Bank Demerara, and Good Hope and Columbia on the East Coast Demerara. These would greatly improve the provision of electricity to our customers and should cost so that...When there is a problem now in one location, it tends to affect a huge, maybe a quarter or more, part of the whole network. In this new system, maybe, it could be limited to one-twentieth. If there is a problem in one, a similar problem at a particular location, because of the many new feeders coming out of the new substations, it should really reduce the frequency of interruptions and the duration of interruptions.

The new system will involve supervisory control and data acquisition called the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system. We hope to be able to find some money - it may depend on how oil prices go - to provide the capitalisation cost for about 2,000 households with lower incomes so that they can get onto the grid. There is a new 26 megawatt power plant coming up at Vreed-en-Hoop.

Hinterland electrification: Mr. Speaker, if you go through the Hinterland, you would see many of the homes now, maybe altogether, about 13,000 homes that have solar lamps, 11,000 from our recent system and 2,000 from previous programmes.

I paid attention to Hon. Member Dr. Rupert Roopnarine yesterday and I would like to assure him that all of the things that he spoke about are in our considerations. I think he spoke about – and others may have spoken about – the large amount of moneys in the Guyana Gold Board (GGB). They should know that the GGB buys gold at London-fixed prices in Guyana and it sells it back some three months later, generally. The GGB has little or no margins there. There are big flows and there are big risks involved in those flows. Most private people who have gone into the business have eventually come back and said to me, “For me to be getting into this business in Guyana, you have to allow me to take up the royalty.” I said, “No way. I am not giving you the royalty. If you want to do business in Guyana to compete with the GGB, do it, but I am not giving you the royalty to compete.” Do not be deceived by those big moneys in GGB. They just flow through all the time.

Here we are at the end of a seven-year period of steady growth and it has brought us to a relatively good position. On the one hand, it is said that success leads to more success and greater success will be ours, but there are dangers too. There is the danger that our expectations as a nation and as individuals could rise faster than our growing capability. Growth can also be thwarted if growth and development ends up creating inflationary pressure. If we do not work more, growth and development would push prices up. I have seen evidence of that. At times, when people go into the market and they find prices going up, they wonder whether the success of our sales of non-traditional agricultural produce to the Caribbean is not a cost. And it could be, if we do not increase production. We have to increase production. We have to keep working and working more productively if we have to maintain our growth and development.

In this regard, I would like to end on a good note. Even as I was preparing for this debate, something caught my attention. A boat builder, Mr. Satrohan Sookdeo, of Pump Road, Mon Repos said plainly:

“I like build boat.”

There is Mr. Leighton Bynoe of Charity, Essequibo Coast. He said:

“Boat building has been the joy of my life and it has brought me much happiness and satisfaction. Yes, of course, it is very hard work and inclement weather can be a disadvantage at times, but my love for my job and dedication keeps me going. It is such a thrill to stand back and watch my handiwork when the job is completed.”

Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members, I would like to call on all our Guyanese to... I know, from my experience working in bauxite, that all our people have in them ingenuity, a spirit of innovation. Do you know when you used to know that? When you went into the machine shop and there were 500 guys and a few of them were moving purposely, you know that they were building something that they really liked and they wanted. We used to say cow running. Every one of us has a spirit of entrepreneurship. Each of us has a spirit of innovation and ingenuity. What I want is that we follow these two Guyanese, Mr. Leighton Bynoe of Charity and Mr. Satrohan of Pump Road, Mon Repos; take them as examples. If we can be like them, Guyana will surely be on the road to becoming like Singapore and becoming a developed state.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will take the recess now. We will also be having that important meeting of the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply. We will try our best to hold to the 30-minute recess time because we still have the Leader of the Opposition to speak and the Minister of Finance to reply and I know that we would all like to leave here early.

I propose, as well, that immediately after the Budget debates close, we will resolve ourselves into the Committee of Supply tonight. That is the proposition. I hope that we can be expeditious in our business.

Sitting suspended at 7.47 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 8.44 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Good night everyone, please be seated. This session is resumed. I invite the Leader of the Opposition to address the House.

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise to call upon Members of this Hon. House not to support the motion laid by Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, Minister of Finance, on 25th

March, in which he called for the approval of the Estimates of the Public Sector in the Budget for the financial year 2013.

Even as I do so, I congratulate my colleagues in A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) and the Alliance for Change (AFC) whose incisive and sincere presentations have shone light into the dark corners of public life which have been ignored by this Budget. They focused on the lives and livelihood of ordinary people, real people, people like Roslyn Stephen who bled to death between Parishara, the Lethem Hospital and Boa Vista; the nameless victims at Port Kaituma who died after drinking water which had been piped into their homes; the villagers of Parishara and the villagers of Kako in the Upper Mazaruni who were trying to preserve the sanctity of their communities. Our speakers brought to light the plight of ordinary people who every day die from preventable diseases.

This National Assembly meets again this year, April, as we did last year April to consider this National Budget. The National Assembly meets again to be presented with a budget which is being crafted and drafted by the People's Progressive/Civic (PPP/C) Administration without the meaningful consultation and the collaboration of the majority of this Assembly.

The National Assembly meets again to deliberate not upon a national budget, not upon a working people's budget, not a budget that seems to be working for the people, but on a budget that is anti-poor, anti-people and anti-progress. It is an exclusionary budget. It is not an inclusionary budget for everyone. It is a budget of the PPP, by the PPP and for the PPP.

We have been presented with a cardboard Budget which has been painted to look like concrete. It is glossed over by a few goodies, but they are thin veneer without substance. The people want a budget that goes to the heart of the everyday issues which confront them, one that does the greatest good for the greatest number. That is why last year we invited the President, a Member of this Parliament, the Head of State, the Chief Executive of the Republic, to address this Hon. House not once, but every year. You yourself, Mr. Speaker are on record as inviting His Excellency to address this House.

The President's presence, we had hoped, would lend some policy direction to the Executive's presentation of this Budget, but that was not to be. His absence was, perhaps, a mistake and clearly his guidance on this Budget has been missed. This Budget before the Assembly has no

guiding philosophy. The Budget inspires no one; it has no imagination, no innovation. It seems the captain left the crew and the ship is adrift.

The Budget did articulate some so-called medium-term objectives. A Partnership For National Unity shares the common desire to improve the quality of life in Guyana. We also want a country which is modern and which has a strong and resilient economy. We want a country that has institutions that inspire confidence and provide protection; one that is physically integrated with the neighbours in South America; one that is economically integrated with the neighbours in the Caribbean; one that has a comprehensive infrastructure network that allows easy access to harness our resources and to move our goods and our people; one that provides all citizens with access to high quality education, health care and other social services; one that has a population in which every single man, woman and child has access to competence in information and communication technology; one that attracts visitors who want to bring their business here; one that has qualified persons who want to work; one that provides every young person with the opportunity to find rewarding employment; one that allows elderly persons to retire in comfort, and so on.

The problem is that the Budget before us does not provide the resources to realise this rhetoric. What provisions are there in this Budget, for example, to rebuild institutions such as the Ombudsman - which came to us at the time of Independence, but which has virtually disappeared over the years - and the Public Service Appellate Tribunal. These are institutions which we need to inspire confidence and provide protection to aggrieved citizens and civil servants. What resources does the Budget provide to build the bridges and highways from Linden to Lethem, from Bartica to Mahdia, from Annai to Surama and to develop a comprehensive infrastructure network?

What resources have been allocated to give citizens access to high quality education at the University of Guyana? What resources have the Budget provided to make our hinterland safe from everyday banditry, and safe enough from piracy along our coastland so that we can attract investors who want to bring their business here? How does this Budget expect to provide every young person with the opportunity to find rewarding productive employment? How far will \$12,500 go to allow every elderly person to retire in comfort?

The truth is that these dreams have been on paper for the last two decades. The nation, however, wakes up every morning to the dreary reality of crumbling roads, broken schools, an underfunded university, shaky institutions and an army of jobless dropouts. One just has to go to secondary schools at Annai, or Vreed-en-hoop or Houston to look at the laboratories and to look at the dormitories to realise that the dreams of the Budget are far from being accomplished. One just has to look at the classrooms at places like Annai and one will see how shallow the proposals of the Budget are. The Budget simply does not furnish the funds to make these dreams come true. The more serious challenges facing families are the unavailability of jobs, the quality of education at primary and secondary levels along the coastland and in the hinterland, the quality of education at the University of Guyana – a decrypt system which brought students, staff and workers out on strike last year which is still unsettled. They still consider the daily threats to human safety where there are three armed robberies every day, where there are two murders every week, and where there are 12 fatal accidents every month; the threats to public health where three nameless persons have died and over 500 fell ill in Barima Waini.

A minority administration must not presume it could ignore the public will forever. It cannot attempt to exclude the majority side from contributing to the preparation of such an important measure as the Budget. It has only been through the contribution of the majority side in this debate so far that the Executive has been made aware of the real situation on the ground affecting the majority of our people. Guyana, under the present Budget, despite the promises of “overcoming challenges together, accelerating gains for Guyana,” is more likely to face the same challenges for another year as it does today.

The Budget is worse than a mistake; it is a blunder. It is impossible at this time for a minority to comprehend fully the complexity of the demography, the geography, the economy and the social and political changes taking place throughout this country. All politics is local. We are on the ground among the people. We are the ones listening to the people, learning from the people. When we speak, we speak with the voice of the people and that is why we must be heard.

Just look at my visit to Kwatamang and Woweta last weekend. A paid state official travelled from Georgetown to Kwatamang simply to plaster posters on the wall attacking the Honourable ‘Hero’ here, Mr. Sydney Allicock. Can you imagine paid state employees leaving Georgetown to go to Kwatamang to plaster posters? - A waste of money. How could we vote money to buy

markers and stationery for that Ministry? We have to teach them a lesson! Instead of carrying in a few footballs for the young men of Kwatamang they are carrying in posters and crayons to mark up the walls - terrible.

Every budget is a plan; it is an economic plan, a financial plan. The Budget must be forward-looking not backward-looking. It must have a clear vision, a projection of what needs to be done tomorrow to solve today's problems. It must provide the resources to achieve the objectives of the plan. A budget is not an opportunity to resort to a recapitulation of previous administrations, a temptation which few on the executive side have been unable to resist. Rather than chart a bold course, the Executive has decided to go backwards in time.

This Budget is meant to point the economy in the direction of transformation and to marshal the people's efforts to draw on their entrepreneurial energy to overcome the challenges in the words of the slogan, "together". But public confidence in the ability of the People's Progressive Party/Civic Administration to run the economy has slid and slipped, especially among the young persons, among the workers, among the labour unions. The general aura of gloom - the gloom of poverty, the gloom of a prolonged security crisis, the gloom of rising cost of living - has seen support draining away from the powers that be.

The Budget presentation of 25th March did nothing to restore hope. It was neither ambitious nor adventurous. It failed to impress this Assembly and failed to impress the Nation. A bold budget was needed to move the country forward at a faster pace but such a budget is yet to be seen. This House is not an annual general meeting of some corporation. The Budget is not a treasurer's report. This debate is not an exercise in accountancy. The Budget is not an exercise merely to look at assets and liabilities, to look at revenue and expenditure.

A budget is a tool for development of the country. It needs a visionary approach, an approach to education, an approach to employment, an approach to empowerment, an approach to development. It is true that the authors of the Budget did do a cut-and-paste job; they clearly read all the press statements from the AFC and APNU and listened to the television broadcasts. They would have heard the APNU declare 2013 the year for youth and, therefore, they threw a few crumbs to the youth. But the underlying hope was always that the authors of this Budget should take reasonable and realistic measures to encourage job creation. This task has gone unaddressed

for too long. There have been a lot of projects like the cellophane President's Youth Choice Initiative and the President's Youth Award Republic of Guyana with taffeta graduations. These were designed to look like they focus on jobs but, in fact, they are just another version of PPP/C pet projects.

The Budget must include real measures that provide work for young people. The basic fact that remains is that all parties acknowledge that Budget 2013 will not, cannot, and did not ever intend to change the lives of the mass of young people in this country. Jobs are scarce for young people from Moruca to Aishalton, from Kaikan to Kildonan. The story is the same all over the country. Young school leavers simply do not have the skills to equip many of them for the world of work. There is no part of the economy that provides employment opportunities for them. There has been growth but it has been jobless growth. When we consider that a couple of weeks ago 17,000 of our children wrote the National Grade Six Examinations let us ask ourselves how many of them will see Caribbean Secondary Examinations Council (CSEC) and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE)?

Economic competence is about having a strategy when the economic conditions move the budget off course. A country like ours that needs to build drop-in centres for street children and night shelters for the destitute is facing a really dire social situation. A country that needs to seek foreign assistance - and boast about it - to build a centre for rehabilitation and reintegration at Onverwagt, really "deh bad". A country that is cramming its prison at Georgetown with nearly 1,000 inmates costing the state \$350,000 a year each in a space with a capacity for 675 means surely that we are sleep walking into a social nightmare, not waking up into an economic dream. We will be worse off if we are to ignore the impending social catastrophe which these developments foreshadow. The ranks of the destitute, the homeless, the poor, and the street dwellers, are swelling under the burden of oppression like the one before us.

Guyana today should be a country of bright prospects, should be a country of opportunity. A sound education system is the bedrock of that opportunity. It is essential if we are to exploit the opportunities and overcome the challenges facing us. In this regard, I would like to refer to the remarks I delivered, albeit accidentally, to the graduating class of the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) last October. I spoke of, and I quote:

“...the opportunities for engineers to build bridges and roads to open our vast hinterland and to develop schemes to exploit our hydro-electric potential; the opportunity for geologist to develop our bauxite diamond, gold manganese and quarrying resources; the opportunity for biologists, botanists, zoologists, and agriculturalists to expand food production; the opportunity to improve communication and human learning; the opportunity for manufacturers, shippers, builders to drive our economy forward at a faster rate. Where will these scientists come from? They must come from the school system.

These opportunities cannot be fully exploited and this country cannot be developed by chance or conjecture. They can be achieved only if a large part of the population is not paralyzed by poverty. They can be achieved not by the ignorant and by the illiterate. They cannot be achieved while so many of our primary school children cannot qualify to enter secondary school or when thousands of our children drop out of primary and secondary schools every year. They cannot be achieved while school leavers cannot find jobs. They can be achieved only by people with a first class education. They can be achieved only by the creation of an education nation that brings all our people together in a knowledge society. They can be achieved only by combining our energies, integrating our communities and working together for the common good rather than pulling apart.

Dark forces, the forces of poverty, oppression and racial hatred, still threaten to pull us apart. An educated nation ought to be one in which intelligence prevails over ignorance, cooperation over confrontation, and national integration over communal disintegration.”

End of quotation.

The people are still concerned about human safety. The Government of Guyana needs to introduce a serious security strategy to protect our citizens from criminal violence. A Partnership For National Unity accuses the People’s Progressive/Civic Administration of failing to implement root-and-branch reforms in the security sector. The latest statement on security sector reform was announced nearly two years after it was handed over to the director of the project, Mr. Khemraj Rai. Two years after it was handed over, it was announced.

The emphasis will be on four major areas – administration, career planning (well, you must have that after all with all the banditry in the hinterland and the cocaine smuggling), integrity, probity

and public relations, and communications. Those are the highlights of this much vaunted plan to reform our security sector. Let us pay attention to the public relations and career planning. This is what the nation waited 12 years to hear. These might be necessary, but are not sufficient to make our citizens safe.

Our partnership accuses the administration in this budget debate of deliberately avoiding references to the high rate of armed robberies, the contraband smuggling, the gun running, the money laundering, the narcotics trafficking, the people trafficking, the piracy and the banditry which are plaguing the country. This, in the words of the Prime Minister a few minutes ago, is what we call historical facts.

We are still in the throes of the wave of criminal violence which plagued the first decade of this millennium and which will forever be remembered as the legacy of this administration, the legacy of drug-driven murders, massacres and executions. There were 1,432 deaths arising from massacres, executions and other murders; an average of 143 murders per year during the first decade. There were over 139 more murders in 2010, and 130 in 2011 bringing the total to 1,701. Guyana is bleeding. This administration has failed to enforce laws which protect life or even to ensure the killings are investigated. In the middle of March, on the 16th March, I was in Lusignan and the mother of some of the children who were killed there is still weeping because this administration refuses to convene a commission of enquiry. In Lusignan, two weeks ago, the people are still weeping and the administration stonily refuses to convene a commission of enquiry to investigate that atrocity!

Budget 2013 has failed to promise measures which could prevent recurrences of these atrocities. The Budget must show us how it would provide financial resources that will make our country safe. It must show how these financial resources will prevent the cocaine trade from killing our children and how it will prevent gun running which is pumping violence in this country. These are the historical facts about the last twelve years.

This country arguably has never been wealthy but the appearance of hordes of extremely destitute and homeless persons, the appearance of scores of street children over the last two decades is a man-made catastrophe. It is not an act of God. Poverty can be reduced and, perhaps,

eventually eradicated but only with good governance, a safe environment and sensible public policies. We do not see these as being evident in this Budget.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Index Report provides a rough guide of the people's quality of life. Education and health are two of the major measures of human comfort. Countries which possess well-built schools which are equipped with libraries, laboratories, recreational facilities, schools which are staffed by trained teachers who manage their institutions efficiently, are likely to enjoy a high standard of education. And really Mr. Speaker, I hope that one day you can take this National Assembly on a tour of our hinterland schools to see how we are training up the next generation. Then we will get some budgets which are realistic in their focus. Go to Houston and see what is taking place there. The same goes for our hospitals which are staffed by nurses, doctors and technicians.

Little is spoken nowadays of Guyana's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. It was meant to be a mechanism through which this country, once upon a time defined as a low income country, could have crafted its own plan for poverty reduction and would have provided a guideline for the World Bank to render assistance. We need a new social contract, a contract that brings our parties together to work for the common good, a contract that brings labour together with business, and civil society, if we are to get out of this trough, as my colleague Mr. Carl Greenidge said, this 'black hole' we are in.

Guyana is at a crossroads. The National Assembly has an obligation, an obligation to provide leadership to unite our peoples. It has a duty to design plans and strategies to overcome the economic political and social challenges, but we must do this together. It is our duty to forestall any folly that might prolong the nightmare of insecurity and disunity which can lead us down the path of deeper distrust. Desperate diseases demand desperate remedies. These are the words of Guy Fawkes nearly 400 years ago. Desperate diseases demand desperate remedies and we do not see them in this Budget.

This is a cardboard Budget and will have little impact on the poor. It must be amended if the people of this country are to see real changes in their lives. There is no way this country can move forward with such a budget which disregards their needs, which disregards the role of the people themselves in developing this country. It is time to wake up; it is time to stop dreaming.

For these reasons A Partnership For National Unity cannot support this motion which calls on us to adopt this cardboard Budget in its present form. We urge the administration, even at this eleventh hour to sit with the majority, to construct a realistic budget which will satisfy this nation.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

9.14 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Members and Leader of the Opposition. Just before I invite the Minister of Finance to address us in rebuttal and he is going to rebut everything said, the Hon. Member Mr. Nagamootoo has indicated to me that last evening he presented some figures, which he has since satisfied himself was not correct and wishes to correct that. I believe that I will give him that opportunity to do so, so that the Minister may have the full opportunity to rebut. Go ahead Mr. Nagamootoo.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I did indicate last evening when figures were challenged, that I would circulate and present to the House the source of the figures. There were one set of figures that I had wanted to put in writing. The calculations were not correct as regards the percentage increase for two corresponding periods: 2007-2012, which was \$825 billion as against \$471 billion in the corresponding period 2001-2006.

The allocation increase was erroneously stated as \$373 billion when it should have been \$354 billion. The percentage was also erroneously stated. I wish to correct that as an inadvertence and correct it into the record. I hope it does not cause the Minister any inconvenience in making his response.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much Hon. Member. With that said, I invite the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh to rebut on behalf of the Government as mover of the motion. Thank you. Go ahead.

Dr. Singh (replying): Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Permit me, in particular, to thank Mr. Nagamootoo for offering on this occasion to correct erroneous, as he described the numbers he tendered last evening. Permit me also to thank him for choosing this fortuitous opportunity to

offer that correction. He must know that I have a particular preference for speaking immediately after he has spoken.

Let me say that it was in fact my intention to draw the House's attention to the fact that the Hon. Mr. Nagamootoo has once again presented before this House, numbers that, well by his own admission today, were erroneous. That had they not been corrected - and I thank him for making the correction today - would have created an incorrect impression.

If I may pause for a few minutes to address a few other matters that Mr. Nagamootoo spoke of, in particular, as they relate to numbers. Mr. Nagamootoo alluded yesterday to the matter of the Public Debt of Guyana, a matter for which he appears to have acquired a particular affinity, even if not competence. He in particular drew attention, once again, to an observation that in nominal Guyana dollar terms, the total public debt of Guyana in 2012 was greater than it was in nominal Guyana dollar terms in 1992. He, in particular, made reference to an answer I tendered to a question he so kindly asked. The answers to which were, in fact, already in the public domain in various documents. I had no difficulty answering the question in the finite defined space offered, by the opportunity of his question. It said, "Guyana dollar Public Debt increased from \$263 billion in 1992 to \$355 billion in 2012," numbers which Mr. Nagamootoo correctly said I supplied to this House and numbers by which I firmly stand.

He draws from those numbers the conclusion that Guyana is therefore more indebted now than it was in 1992. It goes without saying that the extent of one's indebtedness could scarcely be measured solely by the nominal amount that one owes in isolation from the nominal amount that one owns as distinct from owes, that is one's assets base and the amounts that one earns. In other words, you could not possibly compare two entities, one of which has total debts of \$1 billion and the other that has debts of \$1.1 billion. If the former has assets of \$100 million - so the one that owes \$1 billion has assets of \$100 billion, whereas the one that owes \$1.1 billion has assets of \$1 trillion - then you could scarcely say that the one that owes total debts of \$1.1 billion is more indebted than the one that is much poorer and has an almost equivalent total indebtedness.

This is something that we face in day to day life, if you are comparing two persons or yourself at two points in time. I may have had total debts of \$100,000 when I was a teenager at a time when I had no income. I may now owe \$200,000 at a time when I have an income that quite

comfortably can service this indebtedness and I may have an asset base that might more than adequately cover my indebtedness. In which case, you could closely look solely at my nominal indebtedness and conclude that I am more indebted today, than I was when I was a teenager.

The facts of the matter are that during the period 1992-2012 - and I will go straight to the summary, rather than dilate on the details - while Guyana's Public Debt, denominated in Guyana dollars, increase by 35% - nominal debt in Guyana dollars increased by 35%. Our revenue increased by 666% and our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increase by 1,147%. In other words, we are merely 35% more indebted than we were 20 years ago, [Mr. Nadir: We are 600 times richer.] We are 600 times or whatever the numbers might be, richer, both in terms of our assets. In fact, if you were to convert these numbers into United States dollars, which because most of these debts are denominated in United States dollars is perhaps a more relevant currency. Guyana's external debt from the period 1992-2012 declined by 19% in US dollars nominal terms, not adjusting for inflation and so on. We owe 19% less in US dollars than we did in 1992. The percentage change in our Government revenue is 368% increase and our GDP has increased by 664% over the same period. Whilst, in US dollars nominal terms, our indebtedness has declined, our revenues have increased by 368% and our Gross Domestic Product has increased by 664%.

This, I do not believe, is an overly complicated presentation on this matter. Whilst I understand that the matter has obvious political appeal to Mr. Nagamootoo, I would call on him to assimilate these facts in the most objective manner possible and put this matter to rest. It is simply misleading to say Guyana is more indebted now than we were 20 years ago. Through you Sir, I urge Mr. Nagamootoo to take these facts before him, I would have happy to share these numbers with him and indeed to spend some time going through them with him, so that this misinterpretation on his part can be retired and put to rest once and for all. Like I said I do not believe that this is a particularly complex matter to grasp.

Mr. Nagamootoo also made reference to a table provided in the National Estimates yesterday - well he cited a number and he has since circulated the table and for this I thank him too, he said identifying the total liabilities of Public Corporations, but the specific detail or the specific legion is "Outstanding loans and credits contracted by the Government of Guyana and utilised by Public Corporations". Those total US\$264 million, giving us a total, when you take into account loans

and credits contracted by Public Corporations you get the US\$282 million equivalent to the \$57 billion Mr. Nagamootoo spoke of.

Let me say first of all and again I will be happy to spend some time with Mr. Nagamootoo or indeed any other Member of Parliament, to go through the details. This does not represent total liabilities of Public Corporations. In fact, the accompanying table, there is an Appendix NA attached to the Estimates, on page 496 of volume 1 of the National Estimates lists what these liabilities are. They are predominately in relations to two entities, which should come as no surprise to this House. In fact, this is public information and not another discovery on the part of Mr. Nagamootoo. They comprise essentially loans contracted by the Government of Guyana and utilised by or un-lent to either the Guyana Sugar Corporation Inc. or the Guyana Power and Light Company (GPL). The overwhelming majority of that amount, of which the details are in the table, again I will not detain this House unduly on the details, but Appendix NA, which has been presented to this House as part of these Estimates, in keeping with our Government's commitment to openness and transparency, these details are all abundantly provided in the Estimates. That amount to which Mr. Nagamootoo referred, in fact is not a new discovery or new loans contracted, but are old loans contracted, particularly in relations to sugar and electricity, in particularly as it relates to sugar, the Skeldon Sugar Factory.

If I might, very briefly, digress also to a comment made and it is not my intention to spend too long on these matters. Much was made about reference to animals and who has called whom which animals. Examples were cited about our four legged friends, I do not what to repeat it, but I do not think it is un-parliamentary to say donkey or any of its synonyms. But much was made about who called whom donkey or like I said one or another of that animal's synonyms. When the fuss and hullabaloo first emerged on this matter, my memory wondered immediately to an article that I had read in the November, 29th, 2012 *Kaieteur News*, one of Mr. Nagamootoo's preferred newspapers, headlined, "Standoff between Opposition and Government; we want to break the gridlock – says Moses Nagamootoo." In that article, Mr. Nagamootoo is quoted as referring to the PPP/C foisting its paramountcy over the State media, etc, in his opinion. He then goes on to speak of what is seen in Guyana as the "Donald Duck Doctrine".

If Mr. Nagamootoo believes that he enjoys the latitude to refer to someone, I am not sure who he was referring to as "Donald Duck", but one can make a reasonably good speculation on he might

be referring to as the “Donald Duck Doctrine”. I rather suspect that the inevitable conclusion, setting aside ducks, donkeys, et cetera the inevitable conclusion is, “What is good for the goose is good for the gander” and if you want to enter the mud you must be prepared to get you feet and at least you fingers dirty. Mr. Nagamootoo does not enjoy a monopoly right on calling people names or attributing animal names to them.

I thought that I will digress very momentarily on that matter; moving swiftly on. I will return in due course to some of the other observations made by Mr. Nagamootoo in his most recent presentation and in indeed those made by the Leader of the Opposition. Permit me to thank all of my colleagues on this side of the House who spoke during the course of the debate on the Budget 2013 and who so abundantly and eloquently made the already compelling case in favour of this very important exposition of Government policy and Government projects and programmes.

I recall with pride and satisfaction, the many presentations made, like I said by my Colleagues on this side of the House. While I am loath to single out any particular presentation, I recall Ministerial Colleagues, like Ms. Priya Manickchand speaking so passionately and energetically about the hard work that she and her technical staff are doing, in particular, in relations to such matters as the eminent achievement of Universal Secondary Education. I remember her speaking about the huge difference that a single boat going into a riverine community would make in aiding the accomplishment of this lofty, but eminently attainable goal of Universal Secondary Education that we set ourselves.

I recall her speaking passionately about technical and vocational education as an alternative path way, particularly for our young people and of our efforts to increase access and improve relevance of the training that we offer. I recall my regional Members of Parliament (MP) Colleagues, particularly those from the Regions. Like MP, Damon from Region No.2, who was a former National Democratic Council (NDC) chairman and is now a distinguish Member of Parliament. He spoke so excitedly about the phenomenal changes which are taking place under the People’s Progressive Party Civic Government in his Region. He spoke excitedly about the transformation that is taking place in rice industry; he spoke of the Government’s investment in drainage and irrigation; he spoke of how Government’s investment in transport infrastructure have in fact transformed and dramatically reduced travel times. In fact, I saw the personal

satisfaction in his face and in his eyes, as he spoke of the reduction of the travel time from Parika to Supenaam, from five hours, I believe it was he said, to a mere two hours.

Only to name a few examples and like I said I recognise the perils of selecting one or two examples when there was such an abundance of outstanding contributions, as it relates to elaborating both what was happening and what is happening. The exciting changes that are taking place in our country and also the relevance and importance of the policies and intervention contained in Budget 2013.

To my Colleagues on the opposite side of the House, I thank you also for enriching the debate on budget 2013. I will say that many of you made productive suggestions and as have been said by some who have spoken before me, we saw this in particular as it related to regional MP's who evidently had intimate familiarity with what was happening in their regions, brought very specific concerns, many of which we relate to and all of which, in the case of the concerns, we are committed to addressing.

Once again, I recognise the peril of singling out a particular contribution. In the wee hours, I suppose one says wee hours when one speaks of the morning, in the closing hours of last night, in fact in the last hours, in the last minutes of our proceeding last evening, we had what I would consider one of the most refreshing contributions to this debate from Region No.3 Member of Parliament, Mr. John Adams. Who spoke with such frankness and candour about the positive things that are happening in his region that I feared when I saw his Chief Whip turned and looked at him with the scowl that she had on her face; a scowl of disapproval, as if he was not permitted to acknowledge that positive things were happening in Guyana. I really do hope that he does not pay the price for his frankness last night.

His was a refreshing contribution and I must confess that I would have been pleased. I believe that this debate would have been considerably enriched if there was more of that coming from that side of the House. Indeed, just as there is the call that those of us on this side of the House must not say that all is good and perfect in Guyana, equally, if we are to have a frank and honest exchange, then my friends on that side of the House have an equal responsibility not to paint the patently false picture that all is dismal and bad in Guyana. That in fact is equally in fact perhaps even more so an inaccurate picture of what the state of our country is.

I found it particularly interesting that throughout the course of the presentations made by my friends on that side of the House, apart from the well trodden topics all of which are known to us, there was very little said about what was specifically contained in the Budget. In particular, rare was the occasion of any acknowledgement whatsoever; of any agreement of the slightest shred of agreement with anything at all contained in Budget 2013. In fact, one could not help getting the inescapable conclusion listening to my friends on that side of the House that they saw nothing in the Budget that they considered of relevance, of use or of benefit to Guyana. Indeed, in no place or at no point in this Budget Debate was this better illustrated by the two lead presentations from the Opposite side of the House, during the course of today. Mr. Ramjattan perhaps inadvertently alluded to what the real root of the problem is, when he said and I hope not prophetically, that this Budget is going to have troubles because our politics have troubles. I took notes; I was careful enough to write those words down as he said them.

Surely, we should be able in this House, particularly, as we “pat” ourselves on the back for being on the verge of what is or perhaps even beyond the verge of what is often described as the New Dispensation. Surely we must be able to set politics aside and agree on some things even if partisans politics; even if the competition for political space beholds us not to agree or praise overtly. Surely we must, as I invited my Colleagues in the Budget Speech, be able to be guided ultimately by that which is good for Guyana.

Even if we are in a political contest for space, surely we must be able to set that aside and exercise our expressed views and our vote, guided, like I said in the Budget Speech, by that which is good for Guyana.

I was particularly disappointed when I heard the Leader of the Opposition use language, which I would say was uncharacteristically caustic coming from him. Coming from some Members on his side, I might now have been surprised, but coming from the distinguished Leader of the Opposition, such extreme and caustic language, frankly speaking, disappointed me and took me by surprise.

I will say that I would not have expected the distinguished Leader of the Opposition to have used language such as, “A cardboard budget painted over”. I would return to this matter, but just to mention, “A cardboard budget painted over to look like concrete; as having no philosophy, no

imagination, and no creativity. Worst yet, as worst as a mistake, a blunder and as oppressive...” Once again, the Leader of the Opposition, a distinguished Guyanese, a man with vast experience, even as a Member who is new to this House, a person for whom I have great respect, is indeed a person from whom I would have expected a little bit more balance. Not least because, if one peruses the very manifesto with which he and his partnership went to the people of Guyana in November, 2011, one finds - it was a little bit difficult to find substantive policies in the Manifesto, but I found a few. In particular, I found a few initiatives, even if you want to set aside the grand policies. I found, in fact, a number of interesting references to a number of initiatives and objective statements in his Manifesto. I will mention some of them. We read your Manifesto, we are guided by what you think is important. That is a form of listening. We listen to what you say publicly. We read your written submissions. We listen to your pronouncements in meetings and at all other public forums. If we were to be guided by this undertaking that you gave to the people of Guyana in November, 2011, one would see a number of very interesting references.

If we take for example, economic transformation, there is reference to enlarging the size and scope of education and training institutions to prepare young people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for individual and collective development. There is reference to improving the efficiency of Government and reducing the bureaucratic red tape. There is reference to specialise training programmes and a separate and dedicated training institution for the Tourism and Hospitality Industry. There is reference to expansion and diversification of the agricultural based, to ensure a greater degree of food security and realising the long standing goal of becoming the food basket of the Caribbean. There is reference to facilitating affordable access to credit for individuals and groups. There is a large section on information and communications technology and I thought, perhaps for a minute I should pause and read some of this section.

“APNU is convinced that only via an all pervasive and ultra high speed broadband network will Guyana be ready to embrace and fully exploit the boundless opportunities that an ICT enabled future presents.”

It seems to me that in writing this manifesto, APNU had a prelude of the PPP/C’s 2013 Budget, except that they seem to have abandoned the promises they made to the people of Guyana. If one continues:

“Major infrastructural investment is a critical necessity to spur the development of a new knowledge based sector. This will act as a catalyst in developing and deploying innovative interactive digital services to homes, schools and businesses.”

On Information and Communications Technology (ICT) furthermore, they speak of legal and regulatory frameworks, human resources development, and industrial use of ICT to create an enabling and conducive environment.

9.44 p.m.

Government is an active participant and user of ICT. Does it sound familiar, Mr. Speaker? Perhaps I should turn to the relevant section in Budget 2013, the “PPP Budget” that is cardboard and empty and has no vision and has no philosophy, but so closely resembles, in so many elements, the very promises that you made to the people of Guyana and that you have now shamelessly abandoned.

I have been, on previous occasions, accused of being less than magnanimous at the close of a budget debate. Even if the last speaker on the Opposition side wanted to be critical and did not see it fit to be magnanimous and did not think that we were deserving of any magnanimity at all, at the very least, I would have expected some honesty and acknowledgement that there are some initiatives that the APNU, themselves, promised to the people of Guyana and that the PPP is now delivering to the people of Guyana, at the very least. To do otherwise is nothing less than an attempt to hoodwink the people of Guyana; to say, “We do not agree with any of this. Forget the fact that these were the very things that we were promising you in 2011”.

Much the same... [*Interruption*] Yes, I have it here. In fact, much the same is to be said of the AFC Manifesto and, for completeness, notwithstanding your own most recent political affiliations, permit me, Sir, to make a few references to the AFC Manifesto; I think that it was called an Action Plan: Upgrading of technical schools for vocational training and creating job placement programmes. These are things that we heard you say that you believe that these things are important. We listen to you and we are doing them and, at the very least, there should be a willingness to acknowledge that instead of saying, “you do not ever listen to us”, “you do not ever accept any ideas or suggestions”, “you only do your own thing”, “you do not consult”. What better example is there than the abundant examples of things that these very parties

promised the people of Guyana and the People's Progressive Party/Civic, of course, we did not agree with all that was said in the manifestos and to the extent that there were overlaps we have delivered them. Let us take for example, of course, that which is good we will do. When it is good for Guyana the PPP will do it and we have no apology to offer for that. We would not refuse to do it simply because you suggested it. Unlike the Opposition who would cut the budget simply because the PPP suggested it. We would not refuse the people of Guyana the benefits of ICT simply because the idea came from other there; unlike the Opposition who would cut the budget simply because the budget came from the PPP. We would not obstruct a piece of legislation simply because the Minister happens to be Mr. Clement James Rohee and then go outside and say, "We believe this bill is good for Guyana but we will bring it back. The problem is the messenger". This PPP/C Government says to the people of Guyana, "Wherever the idea comes from, if it is good for Guyana, we will do it for Guyana." We have absolutely no apology to offer for that.

Much the same is to be said about the AFC Manifesto – grants to eligible youths for micro credit, apprenticeship schemes for graduates from technical institutes, free lunches. During the course of the budget debate our school feeding programme was disparaged. Do you know what? On page 12 of the AFC's Action Plan, bullet No.8 says "free lunch for all children in primary school" but yet I did not hear the AFC say, "We are glad that you took this idea onboard and even if we do not agree with anything else, we agree with the free lunches because we promised a free lunch". I do not want to get into whether there exists a free chowmein and a free lunch and so on. I know that there has been a lot of public commentary, speculation and satire on whether there exists a free chowmein and a free lunch and so on; with no intension of ethnic preference or profiling in any way.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to say that even if the AFC said that they did not like anything else in the Budget, if they wanted to be honest about Budget 2013, they should have said, "The \$1 billion there for school feeding programme, we are glad that you took that idea and you listened to us and you have implemented a school feeding programme". That would have augured well for a frank and honest debate but they did not do that because their philosophy is to oppose for opposing sake because it comes from the PPP even if two years ago it was something that they,

themselves, said that they would do. I shudder to think whether that is a reflection of how quickly they would abandon their promises and commitments to the people of Guyana.

If one were to look at taxation policy... [Mr. Nagamootoo: You will win the debate but you will lose the war.] Of course, because we do not have the numbers so this is not about merit. Mr. Nagamootoo says that we will win the debate but we will lose the... [Government side in unison: ...war.] I am glad first of all, Sir, that you acknowledge that we are winning the debate. I do not think that that was in doubt. Long before I started speaking we won the debate, but put that aside for a moment. Mr. Nagamootoo is acknowledging that we might win the debate on the merits of our arguments but we will lose the war because of our one-seat majority. What a confession. Let us examine taxation policy. Let us examine page 13. You may say, "I do not agree with the PPP's taxation policy". You may say, "I do not understand the PPP's taxation policy". You may say that I would do the following differently, but for you to either completely ignore taxation policy and ignore, in particular, your own bullets five and six under what you describe as taxation policy. Let me just read bullets five and six on page 13 of the AFC Action Plan. Let me just take bullet six first:

"Increase the PAYE tax free threshold from \$40,000 to \$50,000"

Sounds familiar? It was done by the PPP. Whether it was suggested by the AFC or the APNU or the PPP the PPP did it for Guyana. We did not refuse to do it last year because the suggestion came from the AFC. We did it because we believe that it is good for Guyana. Let us read bullet five:

"Reduce income tax from 33.3% to 25% by the end of our first term"

The terms are usually five years, the last time I checked – a reduction from 33.3% to 25% over a five-year period. We reduced in one year, from 33.3% to 30% but not a word of acknowledgement from the AFC. At the very least, if the AFC was interested in an honest and frank and candid debate, then at the very least, they should have said, "This represents a first step..." admittedly, they might have said that it represents a giant leap because it was almost half of what they were asking for but at the very least they would have acknowledged the phenomenal step taken by the PPP in Government to deliver a promise that they are incapable of delivering to the people of Guyana.

We heard references to flagship projects. I believed that they were described as lumpy projects and I understand what Mr. Greenidge means by those things; they are relatively large capital projects and I think that he also called them prestige projects. I suspect here that he is probably referring to the Amaila Falls Project. He is probably referring to the Marriot Hotel. He is perhaps referring to the Cheddi Jagan International Airport. Let me say that it is recognised throughout the world that the surest way to catalyse transformative change in an economies such as ours is investment in infrastructure. In fact there exists an abundance of references from the development literature that I can quote and I will only select a few. I will quote here from a World Bank press release but again, like I said, I have several publications from which I can quote but I do not want to detain the House unduly. If I were to quote, for example, from the World Bank press release dated 14th January, 2013, the World Bank President, Jim Yong Kim said as follows, the press release is headed up:

“World Bank urges developing countries to safeguard economic growth as the road ahead remains bumpy.”

The World bank President is quoted as saying the following:

“The economic recovery remains fragile and uncertain, clouding the prospect for rapid improvement and return to more robust economic growth. Developing countries have remained remarkably resilient thus far but we cannot wait for a return to high growth in high-income countries so we have to continue to support developing countries...”

I should probably pause and read that more slowly.

“...so we have to continue to support developing countries in making investments in infrastructure, in particular, in health and education. This will set the stage for the stronger growth that we know they can achieve in the future.”

In the entire article there is a succession of quotations there that speak of the role that social and physical infrastructure can play in catalysing economic growth and improving social conditions.

If I were to read from the 2006 *OECD publication* promoting pro-poor growth, this publication speaks of the merits of investment and infrastructure as a catalyst of pro-poor growth and interestingly enough, on page 13, it identifies or describes what it called application of the

principles by sector having outlined a series of principles for investment and infrastructure with the aim of achieving pro-poor growth and under the section entitled *Applying The Principle by Sector* I will just highlight a few of the main *chapeaux*, firstly and I quote:

“Transport facilitates access to economic and social services and enhances the production and trade potential of local, national and regional economies.”

Does that sound familiar, Sir? This is not the PPP. This is not the Government. This is the OECD.

Secondly:

“Reliable, modern energy services are essential for raising growth and productivity and improving the livelihoods of poor people.”

Does that sound familiar, Sir, reliable energy?

Thirdly:

“Information and communication technology increases the efficiency of a wide range of efforts...”

Does that sound familiar, Sir?

Fourthly:

“Despite the importance of water resources, including for drinking water...”

Does that sound familiar, Sir?

Once again the remarkable alignment, it has several bullets. I am not going to read the whole of the book. A brief reference, even the most cursory of references to this *OECD* seminal publication would identify the very glaring and striking alignment between some of the infrastructural priorities that are identified as promoting pro-poor growth and the priorities identified by this Government of Guyana. The list, like I said, goes on.

Much ado has been made of the Marriot project and this project has engaged the attention of this House on so many occasions. Suffice it to say that I do not believe that any objective, right-

minded Guyanese person could argue with the objective of reliable, more affordable and more environmentally friendly electric energy being harnessed for our country and this is, in essence, what Amaila does. I think Minister Ramsammy it was who said it so well when he spoke of the many examples – I think that he was referring to the crony comment – and he was speaking of the thousands of Guyanese who stand to benefit from these investments; the thousands of Guyanese businesses that would benefit from more affordable electricity, the thousand of Guyanese companies that will no longer have to invest in redundant backup power because the electricity supply on the grid would be reliable, the tens of thousands of jobs that will be created for young Guyanese throughout the length and breadth of our country, the hundreds of thousands of Guyanese homes that would benefit now from a more reliable supply of electricity and from a more affordable supply of electricity. These are the people that will benefit from Amaila. It is easy. We can argue, debate and scrutinise the details of the project and we have absolutely no detail with that. No less a person than the President has invited the Leader of the Opposition and a delegation and, to his credit, the Leader of the Opposition attended, I believe, the first meeting himself and sent a delegation to the second meeting and the President said – he attended both meetings, both the one that the Leader of the Opposition was able to attend and the other one which the Opposition Leader was not able to attend – on both of those occasions, “We are willing to answer any question on this project. We are willing to supply and share with you any level of detail. If there is a document that is subject to confidentiality clauses...” In fact, I think that that was even said in a written answer that I tabled in this House. “If there is a document or an agreement that is subject to confidentiality clauses we are willing to share with your team in camera, the details of those agreements subject to their agreeing to the protection of the confidential information [which I do not anticipate would be a problem on your side.]”

We have said that we are willing to subject... We want a good project to be implemented in Guyana and we have submitted the project for the ultimate degree of scrutiny by the Opposition. The President at the first presentation said, “take the presentations away”. In fact, I believe, at the second presentation Mr. Harmon asked ‘Will we get copies of the presentation?’ He said, “We brought copies to give to you. Take the presentations away, study them...” The President actually said, “We know that you may not have all of your technical experts here, consult with them. Get back to us with any questions you have. We are willing to answer them”. Such is our commitment to openness and transparency and subjecting ourselves to scrutiny but to simply say

“the project is not good, abandon it” when there is no obvious alternative in our country... Let me say clearly that the stymieing of this project could very well lead to Guyana having to wait another generation. We have waited long enough for hydropower to be harnessed for the benefit of our country and stymieing this project and frustrating it to abandonment will only serve the result of another generation of Guyanese being denied the benefit of hydropower. I would say to the Opposition, “Subject the project to scrutiny”. Work with us to make it a better project but do not frustrate the project and try to derail it. That is not a position that is consistent with nationalism, patriotism. That is not a position that is consistent with a party or parties that are supposed to be working in the national interests. We maintain that we are willing to subject this project to scrutiny. I see that they are getting a little bit agitated which means that the point is driving home.

Let us take the Marriot project. *[Interruption by Mr. Nagamootoo]* Much is being made. I hear Mr. Nagamootoo hurling all manner of insults. I hear that he is calling me traitor. **[Mr. Nagamootoo:** No, you *[inaudible]* I am sorry. I did not realise. I did not realise that that was what you are referring to. *[Interruption by Mr. Nagamootoo]*

Mr. Speaker: Allow the Minister of Finance. Allow the Minister to rebut. Hon. Members, during the course of this debate, which I think has been of a very high standard and I really thought it was different from most, things have been said that would have irked, annoyed, aggravated, irritated individuals and groups at different times and a sign of maturity is accepting that it is debating and things are going to be said and we have to accept that there are going to be different interpretations, inferences drawn from time to time and much of what happens on the outside is brought in here and we need to accept that certainly, the Government paints the view that the Opposition is against Amaila. The Opposition says that it is not and that it just wants scrutiny. That is what happens on the outside. Let us be candid and accept that. This is a debate, cut and thrust. Proceed, Hon. Minister.

Dr. Singh: Thank you very much, Sir. I will say that I am...

Mr. Speaker: One second.

Dr. Singh: My apologies.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, I ought to have invited you a few minutes ago to move the requisite motion for us to go beyond 10.00 p.m.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I propose that Standing Order No.10 be suspended so that we could conclude the business for today's session.

Mr. Speaker: The motion is proposed that we go beyond 10.00 p.m. to conclude our business for today.

Question put and carried

Dr. Singh: Thank you very much, Sir. My final word on that matter for the time being would be to thank Mr. Nagamootoo for the unequivocal statement that the Alliance For Change – I do not know if he was speaking for the entire Opposition – and hopefully the APNU too are supportive of the Amaila Falls, I am happy and appreciative. I am happy for and appreciative of that clarification and I reiterate our availability and wiliness to subject the project to any degree of scrutiny or even greater scrutiny as I am corrected by my colleague, the Attorney General.

If we were to take the Marriot project, the same applies here. We have time and time again said that we have no difficulty, as we have done with the Amaila Falls project, subjecting the Marriot project to scrutiny. The fact of the matter is that for too long our country has been a country touted for its remarkable tourism potential but a potential that has remained unrealised, un-materialised and if we are indeed to realise that potential certain critical pieces of infrastructure are necessary to be in place. It is not unusual for countries, for Governments, to invest in infrastructure to catalyse growth in particularly important sectors. In fact we do not have to look particularly far. Look only to Trinidad and Tobago, our sister CARICOM country, where if I were to quote from the Trinidad and Tobago Export Directory: “The Trinidad and Tobago Government speaks of its billion-dollar investment in the Waterfront Redevelopment Project which includes a world-class hotel and conference centre...” Here of course I refer to the Hyatt Regency which is such an impressive tourism and conference facility that is so familiar to so many of us in Guyana; indeed a flagship piece of infrastructure throughout the Caribbean. For those who do not know, the Hyatt Regency in Trinidad is a government investment in tourism infrastructure.

Indeed if one goes to the Bahamas – the Bahamas, itself, many years ago recognised the lacuna that existed for infrastructure – invested, government investment, in hotels that included, I am advised, the Ambassador Beach Hotel, the Royal Bahamian Hotel, the Winding Bay Resort, the Lucaya Bay Hotel, the Lucaya Beach Resort, the Grand Bahama Beach Hotel; all, at one point or another were government-owned hotels; infrastructure built by the government of Bahamas in order to launch, to give birth to, to catalyse a tourism industry that today has become world renowned. The Bahamas did it. Trinidad and Tobago did it. Barbados did it and so many other countries in the Caribbean. To use those famous words, words first uttered in this House by my distinguished colleague the Attorney General, “What is wrong with that, Sir?” What is wrong with the Government of Guyana investing in an important catalytic piece of infrastructure such as the Marriot Hotel which inevitably, as has been said umpteen times, will raise the bar of the hospitality industry many times over and will serve as an extremely valuable addition to the critical infrastructure stock that is required for a tourism industry to be given birth to. [**Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Harmon:** Is the Government building the Marriot?] We have already said that we are developing the Marriot under a public/private partnership. A public/private partnership involves Government investment.

I listened from the first day of the debate to contributions made by my colleagues on that side of the House and, speaker after speaker, I waited for a substantial departure from the overworked themes – the Amaila, the Marriot, corruption – which are themes that we have heard many time over. In fact, if anybody were to be accused of cut and paste I would suggest that some of those presentations where the themes were exactly the same and the arguments in fact were the same I think... If anybody were to be accused of cut and paste it would be some of my colleagues on that side of the House.

I think that this was unfortunate because I really do believe that with the benefit of experience in this House, and I really do believe that with the contents of Budget 2013, I really do believe that with the facts before us – the fact that there was so much in Budget 2013 that was actually recommended by the other side of the House – a really golden opportunity was lost. Instead we heard such extreme statements. I spoke of the Oppositions remarks today. I did not speak of his reference on the first day of the presentation of the budget when he spoke of the budget being blank and vacant – I suppose similar to the cardboard theme – and when Mr. Ramjattan spoke of

the budget as a joke and Mr. Nagamootoo spoke of a bleak budget that has been spliced up. I suspect that he might have meant “spiced up”; the journalist may have misquoted him there but the article says “spliced up a little bit like a kite with some frills”.

10.14 p.m.

A budget that brings tax relief to more than 100,000 tax payers, a budget that brings a school feeding meal to tens of thousands of school children, a budget that will bring ICT into almost every home in Guyana, even if you do not agree with everything, Sir. Frankly, I would have been rather surprised if my friends on that side of the House expressed agreement with everything. I think I would have been ambitious to expect agreement with everything, but “bland and vacant joke and bleak budget.”

Nobody in Guyana believes what was said by the Opposition. Nobody in Guyana shares those views. The distinguished Attorney General said it. He said the only people who opposed Budget 2013 are the 33 Members sitting on that side of the House. [Mr. R. Persaud: It is 32 today] Is it 32? It is 32 today. The fact of the matter is that even if the Opposition felt constrained not to say it agrees with everything and we would have been willing and unsurprised at the very least an acknowledgement that there were some things in the budget. Our colleagues, on that side of the House, are not only at variance with us, on this side of the House, on the matter of Budget 2013. The fact of the matter is that they are standing in a very lonely place far removed from the views of the people of Guyana. Let us look at what the organised stakeholders had to say.

[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Okay Hon. Members, allow the Minister to address and continue.

Dr. Singh: The Private Sector Commission (PSC), the organised private sector body in Guyana, legitimately and properly elected to represent all of the private sector, placed on the public record its appreciation of the recognition given to the PSC submissions in relation to Budget 2013. In fact the headlines states, “Private Sector Commission and Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG) pleased with budget”.

Another headline states, “Private Sector gives 2013 Budget thumbs up, includes measures to stem brain drain”.

Another state, “PSC happy with 2013 Budget”.

The private sector does not exist for them. The only opinions that matters to the Opposition are its own. The Private Sector Commission and FITUG are not stakeholders to be listened to. In fact you can hear the dismissive comments, right now, as I quote from the Private Sector Commission and the FITUG, which represents hundreds of thousands of Guyanese workers, and all the Opposition can do is to be dismissive of these stakeholders. These are the investors that are expanding and growing their business and creating jobs. These are the workers who, everyday, go to work in the fields and farms and in the mines and in the offices - growing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

I can hear much rabble emerging from that side of the House.

Once again, I would say this that we in the PPP do not expect the Opposition to agree with everything we say. I will say that to dismiss out of hand the views expressed by legitimate stakeholders, such as the PSC and FITUG, is designed to ignore an important stakeholder. In fact, the public commentary and response were overwhelming, not only from the Private Sector Commission, not only from FITUG, but from every stakeholder group. The Office of the President, in fact, organised a large stakeholder forum at which more than 100 stakeholder, in civil society, representatives attended and a number of those stakeholders publicly said, and are on public record saying, that “We welcome Budget 2013”.

In much the same manner the Opposition, throughout the course of this debate, painted a picture of doom and gloom. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition said that Guyana is bleeding. I would say this: We would be the last to say that all is perfect in Guyana and there are not things that needs to be fixed. Every day we, in the Cabinet under President Ramotar’s directions, wrestle with the reality that there are challenges to be overcome; there are to be fixed. There are things that we would like to see done better and quickly, and more efficiently. Some of them we succeed with and others we are still struggling with. We would be the last to say that all is well and perfect. In fact, we have always said that our work is not complete. When the Opposition paints a picture of uninterrupted doom and gloom the people of Guyana know that that is not the Guyana the Members live in. If they look at the commentary by the business community... If they do not want to listen... Let us say that they do not want to listen to the Private Sector

Commission, they do not want to FITUG, let them listen to what individual companies have been saying about Guyana.

Santa Fe, an investment by one of the Caribbean's largest and most successful entrepreneurs based in Barbados.... [Mr. B Williams: What is his name?] The principal of Santa Fe is a gentleman by the name of Sir Kyffin Simpson. [Mr. B. Williams: Were you there?] I know that you are excited by your recent escapade in Lethem. I can understand, because you have not stopped speaking about it since. If I did not believe better I would have thought it was the first time you have ever been to Region 9.

Santé Fe, a mega farm project undertaken by the Simpson Group of Companies in Barbados, is a project, which is currently under cultivation, that will catalyse a phenomenal revolution in agricultural technology in Guyana. We have not seen anything such as it in Guyana. This is a part of the transformation of which we speak. If I might move the story is replicated in every sector. [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: So he agreed with your budget?] This is an investor responding to the investment and environment created by the PPP/C Government. This is a large international investor responding to a favourable policy environment established by the PPP/C in Government. It represents private sector led growth in Guyana under the PPP/C. That is what it represents, Mr. Harmon. You may not be able to recognise it because it is a private sector led growth and it might come as an alien to you. It does not have to be in my budget. Do you know what is in our budget? Our budget is about creating conducive environment to which the private sector will respond. Our budget is not about nationalising the Berbice Bridge such as what one of your Members advocated last year.

Citizens Bank's loan portfolio increases by \$2.5 billion recording a 14.5% increase in profit after taxation.

Mr. David Dulal-Whiteway, Chairman of Republic Bank, Guyana, in his annual report for the year 2013 reported that his bank recorded a 4.4% growth over prior year results, in its Guyana's operation, recording a profit of \$2 billion.

Home advances up by 24.54%. Those things are not achieved by accidents. My colleague, Minister Rohee, said it. No company invests and grows and prospers in an environment that is

not favourable and conducive, and in an environment that does not enjoy the confidence of the investor. That is the reality.

Bank DIH in its annual report for the year 2013... [**Mr. Greenidge:** That is not to be cited.] We will cite every company in Guyana. Every company in Guyana is our friend. We are not selective like you, Mr. Greenidge. We do not pick and choose our friends like you, Mr. Greenidge. We do not pick and choose our friends by saying they are your problem. Every company and every citizen of Guyana is a friend of the PPP, including Banks DIH, every worker. We do not say that that group of workers is not our problems.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, Minister, take it easy.

Dr. Singh: We do not choose. Every company, and worker in Guyana, is a friend of the PPP.

Banks DIH, Sir, achieved for the first time profit before tax in excess of \$3.5 billion. [**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Talk about the public corporation.] It is private sector dynamism under the PPP, Mr. Nagamootoo. Banks DIH recorded 31% in growth in profit before tax.

Citizens Bank is increasing its revenue by 17%. Demerara Bank is achieving an increase... [**Mr. B. Williams:** Is that your own too?] They are all ours. Every company, every business, every worker in Guyana, as I said, is a friend of the PPP. Demerara Bank, Mr. Yesu Persaud,... [**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Do you want the directory? I will give you the yellow pages.] You bring the yellow pages. They are all prospering under the PPP, Mr. Nagamootoo.

Again, Sir, the decibel level on that side assures me that I am on the right track. When Mr. Nagamootoo gets agitated like that I know that I am pressing the right buttons.

Demerara Bank breaks the \$1 billion profit barrier and Dr. Yesu Persaud, Chairman, said, about the performance by the bank, "I am pleased to report that the bank had an exceedingly good year hitting the billion dollar mark, \$1.043 billion, for the first time in 20 years a record for the banking industry". Those things do not happen in isolation, or by magic, or by accidents.

Digicel investment in Guyana tops US\$70 million over 5 years, said the CEO. So much so, it is employing people and giving them time off to attend this National Assembly, and all manner of things, such as my good friend on that side of the House.

Just a week ago, a brand new investment in Hadfield Street, a \$160 million hotel opened. My colleague and friend Minister Irfaan Ali had the honour of opening that investment to a small to medium size investor. Guyanese entrepreneurs are bringing their savings back, harnessing their savings, recognising how favourable and conducive the environment is under the PPP in Guyana and opening a new hotel, the Millennium Manner Hotel.

“JR Burgers opens new headquarters.” *[Interruption from the Opposition Members.]* Mr. Speaker, I hear some cries over there that this is not our money. Of course, it is not Government’s money. We never said that the Government will drive all of the economic growth. We said we create the environment for the private sector to respond. This is the evidence. This is more than just evidence of investment and growth in Guyana. It is evident that that the Opposition is woefully removed from the reality in Guyana. While the Opposition is busy crying wolf and running around lamenting and beating its chest businesses in Guyana are busy investing, expanding, growing, making profits and employing people because they recognise the attractiveness of Guyana and the PPP/C Government. That is the reality. That is correct, like all of the companies in Guyana.

“Sod turns for new Honda dealership”. “New Marics’ headquarters”, I think the Prime Minister had the honour of turning the sod there. “New DSL outlet opened in Diamond,” “Courts opens new branch in Diamond,” “US\$30 million Giftland Office Max on track for 2013 opening”. This I believe is in Liliendaal. “Wings Aviation commissions new hangar at Ogle.” Guyanese entrepreneurs, again, in fact, are now co-owners of a licensed international airline. Today, a Guyanese entrepreneur owns an airline that runs an international route between Jamaica and New York. We must celebrate those successes and not pretend that they do not exist. “ASL invests in new fuel facilities”. That is Air Services Ltd. “Roraima unveils US\$12 million investment.”

If we are to be honest and frank in this House we must be prepared to celebrate these successes. These are hard-working Guyanese entrepreneurs. Their success are driven by employees who go to work every day and contribute to prosperity and growth of their companies and ultimately of their country.

The story of Guyana under the PPP is not only told by those remarkable manifestations of private sector growth and expansion. Every day in homes and villages, throughout the length and breadth of our country, lives are being transformed for the better. Let us take, for example, our Women Of Worth (WOW) programme. Sometimes we feel that the Women Of Worth programme is just a slogan or a title. WOW - an exclamation perhaps, an abbreviation, a number. Let us take the story of Ms. Gem Hall from Castello Housing Scheme, 41 years old, a second time borrower under the Women Of Worth programme. Incidentally, she has a son and two nieces whom she takes care of. Both of her nieces benefited from the school uniforms programme administered so effectively by the Ministry of Education. She accessed the WOW facility and was able to use the facility to finance inventory in a small grocery shop that she established. Today, in the short space of a couple of years, her total inventory in her grocery shop has increased fourfold and she has accessed her second loan. Today her income has tripled and she herself testified to the fact that her standards of living has improved; she is able to live more comfortably; the profitability of her business has increased dramatically and she is now planning to purchase her own motor car.

A modest story, but a story replicated thousands of times over, throughout the length and breadth of Guyana - whether it is a young professional accessing a new home; whether it is a single mother accessing a WOW loan and whether it is an individual accessing the One Lap Top Per Family (OLPF). Mr. Abdul Hack Halim of Huis t'Dieren, Essequibo, expressing his sincere gratitude for the fact that he now owns a laptop, which he could not have dared to imagine. At 79 years of age he has now discovered the vastest of the world through information and communications technology. [**Mr. Nagamootoo:** He is a crony.] We have no problem saying that every citizen of Guyana is crony of the PPP. He is no more or less a crony of the PPP than any citizen of Guyana, and so many others.

Twenty-two years old, stay-at-home mother, Amanda Spelling, is planning to pursue a new career having learned to use Microsoft Office and acquired other computer skills on her OLPF laptop. These stories are replicated, as I said, throughout the length and breadth of our country. This is the story of the PPP/C in Government.

We committed ourselves to ensuring the creation of a policy environment that will attract private business, that will attract investment, that will be facilitative of growth and expansion, that will

facilitate job creation, that will facilitate increases in real income and that will facilitate improvements in quality of life. Literally every initiative in Budget 2013 serves one or all of those objectives, whether it is investment in transport infrastructure – the ferry, reducing crossing times. It is not only about a ferry or a boat. It is about farmers being able to transport their produce. It is about students being able to get to school. It is about elderly persons being able to access health care

Whether it is investment in information and communications technology, which will see the creation of thousands of jobs, and which our friends on that side of the House, as I said earlier, had promised the people of Guyana, but a promise that they have now abandoned, or whether it is the billions of dollars of additional disposable income placed on the pockets of our most vulnerable through the increases in old age pensions, the reduction in income taxes and the other interventions offered by Budget 2013, every dollar of additional disposable income placed in the hands of a Guyanese citizen, it is a dollar that will be spent buying goods and services; it is a dollar that will increase the turnover of a Guyanese business; it is a dollar that will improve the profitability and potentially competitiveness of that Guyanese business and it is dollar that will contribute to the creation of a job.

I believe, and we on this side of the House believe, that we would not have been surprised if the Opposition said that in the budget it saw a number of thing with which it agreed; it saw the following this which we would have done differently... [**Mr. B. Williams:** Why did you not work with them from the outset?] We did work with them from the outset. What you had - I will conclude on this note - was a vehement, blanket, unsubstantiated set of objections that can best be described as objecting for the sake of objecting; saying no for the sake of saying no; disagreeing for the sake of disagreeing, even when the initiatives were things that they themselves, on that side of the House, had promised. That is unfortunate. There might yet be time, because whilst the first half of the budget debate might have been the opportunity for political rhetoric - the Opposition Members availed themselves at that opportunity clearly to its fullest; something that I consider unfortunate, - be that as it may, the critical time, Mr. Speaker, is when you, Sir, will put the vote. I hope, Sir, that the time, which will elapse now and your putting the successive votes before this House, the Opposition will use that time for reflection and introspection, because the fact of the matter is every single initiative in Budget 2013 is good

for Guyana. I urge my friends on that side of the House, having reflected and having engaged in introspection, that when you will put the question to the House, over the coming days, I trust that we will hear resounding unanimous “ayes” emerging from all.

My last words would be to say that just as how Mr. Nagamootoo does not enjoy a monopoly on the right to call people names so does he not enjoy the right to *cuss people down*.

Thank you very much Sir. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have come to the end of a very expansive and interesting illustrative debate. There were times when I sat here and I said that this is real theatre – sometimes like a Roman amphitheatre and sometimes it was like at the National Cultural Centre, but I thoroughly enjoyed it. I thought the debate, this year, was of a high standard, notwithstanding moments of aggravation and irritation and even annoyance, I am sure, some people felt and even some groups.

I had proposed, Hon. Members, that we resolve ourselves immediate into Committee of Supply. The Clerk advises that the necessary documents are still being printed. In view of that fact, we will take ten minutes suspension and reconvene.

Sitting suspended at 10.41p.m.

Sitting resumed at 12.03 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: I did say that we will take a ten-minute recess, but it has turned out to be close to one hour due to technical difficulties beyond the Parliament Office’s control in setting and printing the report of the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply. I will now ask that we resolve ourselves in Committee of Supply.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the Clerk has prepared and it is circulated a report which guides us through the procedures starting with Standing Order 74 which states that there shall be a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply, to be known as the Business Sub-Committee, that sets out the number of persons to sit on that Committee and identify the three specific duties and functions of this Committee. That is:

- “(i) number of Sittings to be allocated in consideration of the Estimates;
- (ii) the allocation of proceedings to be taken at each Sitting; and
- (iii) the time at which proceedings, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be concluded.”

That Committee has met, a report has been presented. Standing Order 74 (3) states that:

“Whenever the Business Sub-Committee has reported to the Committee of Supply...”

Which is what we are about to do.

‘...the Minister in charge of the Estimates may forthwith move “That this Committee doth agree with the Business Sub-Committee in the said resolution (or resolutions)”.’

The truth is that, Hon. Members, this is all unprecedented because it would have appeared that these Standing Orders would have never contemplated that the Minister, in charge of the Estimates, would not agree with the report. I think it would be an absurdity to ask him to move something that I know he is not in agreement with just to try to comply with the specific Standing Order. What I propose to do is to put the report to the Committee unless, of course, the Minister wishes to subject himself to that. As I said, we are in uncharted deep waters here, because I do not believe, knowing what transpired in the Sub-Committee, that the Minister doth not agree, in fact, rather than doth agree, it should not be.

In the Committee, as well, after many evenings and many hours of deliberations, over two draft proposals for the consideration of the Estimates, there was, what I would consider to be a majority report and there was, what I consider, a minority view. I am of the view that both could have been put and should be put to the House. I do not see the second proposal, but it was my understanding that both the majority and minority views will be put and I would then thereafter put to the House for a vote the two documents, beginning of course with the majority’s view, because it is a majority view, and followed by the minority.

If any Member wishes to be heard I would be most appreciative to hear from any Member very briefly, given that I said we are in uncharted waters at five minutes past midnight on today being the 10th of April.

Dr. Singh: Permit, Sir, very briefly, to say that you quite accurately summarised the proceedings and outcome of the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply. Indeed your characterising of the current situation is one that I concur with, that is to say that the Minister does find himself in an awkward position, because notwithstanding the Standing Order states that I may move, considering that vote against the majority report, I clearly would be in an invidious position moving that the Committee doth agree in the said manner. I shared your concern that the minority report is not circulated. I do know that the alternative schedule, I believe, is the possession of the Members of the Business Sub-Committee and at the appropriate time, when I am advised, we will move that that alternative report be considered.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I do not propose that we take any other suspensions because the document is, in fact, in the possession of some Members. I will ask for an indulgence to have those Members, in whose possession it is in, to advise their colleagues. In fact, we would not be looking at content.

Question put.

Mr. Hinds: Division.

Bell rang.

Mr. Chairman: I am amazed that at this time the Chamber seems to be as full, including the public gallery, as if it is noon. Dr. Persaud, I note that the exigencies of this situation have brought you out please note that the House commiserate with you and your family. This is unprecedented, so we will try to make your stay here as brief as possible.

Committee divided: 32 ayes and 32 noes, as follows:

Ayes

Mr. T. Williams

Mrs. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Mrs. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Bond

Ms. Kissoon

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

Ms. Wade

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Scott

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Mr. Greenidge

Mrs. Backer

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

Noes

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Ms. Shadick

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Dr. Westford

Mr. R. Persud

Dr. Singh

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Hinds

Question put and negatived.

Mr. Chairman: Reminded that I, as Speaker, not being an elected Member of this House, have no casting vote. What I will propose to do next is to put the minority's position to the House and that is the position proposed by the Minister in charge of the Estimates, on behalf of the Government, with the schedule setting out the times and sequential order in which the Estimates will be considered.

Question put

An Hon Member (Opposition): Division.

Committee divided: in 32 ayes and 32 noes, as follows:

Noes

Mr. T. Williams

Mrs. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Mrs. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Bond

Ms. Kissoon

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

Ms. Wade

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Scott

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Mr. Greenidge

Mrs. Backer

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

Ayes

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Ms. Shadick

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Dr. Westford

Mr. R. Persud

Dr. Singh

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Hinds

Question put and negatived.

Mr. Chairman: We have now found ourselves further out and in deeper water.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Chairman, I want to draw attention to Standing Order 8. It seems to me, Sir, that in the situation in which we find ourselves Standing Order 8 suggests that we should be meeting tomorrow. There might be some intermediary steps which we would seek to take.

Mr. Chairman: The first thing that I would like to do is to have us revert to Standing Order 74 (4) which states, and I will quote for the purpose of the persons who are present and do not have the Standing Order with them:

“If the question is resolved in the affirmative,...”

That is, it is agreed upon.

“...the resolution (or resolutions) shall operate as a resolution of the Assembly, but if negatived...”

As it has been the case, twice.

“...the resolution (or resolutions) shall stand recommitted to the Business Sub-Committee.”

I formally announce that the matter pertaining to the scheduling of the consideration of the Estimates by the Committee of Supply is returned and recommitted to the Business Sub-Committee at which place we will attempt, again, to find consensus, or we may repeat the exercise, and to use the words of Mr. Rex McKay, “the exercise may become a pantomime”, because we will just be going through the motion. It seems to me that it is right for compromise in this climate. I think that is what the people of Guyana want to see.

In terms of what we do from here, it would mean that there has to be a motion for us to adjourn. Because, I will say, I do not believe that it is wise to reconvene the Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply, tonight, unless Members are interested. I could send for some coffee, refreshments and we could go through into the morning. In that case, I therefore adjourn this meeting of the Committee of Supply and we will reconvene the Assembly.

Assembly resumed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members we are back at the Assembly stage. We have finished our business for the day, for the night, for the morning. Mr. Prime Minister, you may wish to address us on Standing Order 8 again.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members I would like to propose that we meet at two o'clock on the 10th of April.

Motion put

Ms. Kisson: Division.

Assembly divided: 32 noes, 32 ayes, as follows:

Noes

Mr. T. Williams

Mrs. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Mrs. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Bond

Ms. Kisson

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

Ms. Wade

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Scott

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Mr. Greenidge

Mrs. Backer

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

Ayes

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Clerk of the National Assembly [Mr. Isaac]: I am not hearing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Clerk advised that he needs to hear.

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Ms. Shadick

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Dr. Westford

Mr. R. Persud

Dr. Singh

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Hinds

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, incidentally, before I announce the results, the new technology that we will have actually in due time will allow for electronic voting as well from your device that is before you. The plus sign will be for “yes”, the minus sign will be for “no” and the zero will be for an abstention.

Motion negatived.

Mr. Speaker: The Clerk is about to advise me on Standing Order 8. It does appear to me, on a strict reading and interpretation of it, that if this House fails to make a decision we do automatically roll over to the next date. That is why it is always a necessity for an adjournment to another day, but if there is no decision of the Assembly we automatically roll over to the next day. That is my literal interpretation of Standing Order 8, “...unless the Assembly otherwise decides...”, it shall be. The only difficulty is what shall we be rolling over to do. We could convene the Sub-Committee. This should be done in camera. The press is here and some of this is going live. The Clerk shares my interpretation. Today is Wednesday, but there was a motion moved that we go through until completion. We would not be able to claim that we have gone over 12.00 p.m. There was a motion moved just about ten o’clock for us to complete our business of yesterday, so for the purposes of the Standing Orders the next day would be Wednesday 10th of April.

Hon. Members, we stand adjourned until 2.00 p.m. Wednesday, the 10th of April.

Adjourned accordingly at 12.28 a.m.