

# 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*

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47<sup>TH</sup> Sitting

Wednesday, 10<sup>TH</sup> April, 2013

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*Assembly convened at 2.11 p.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

## **OATH OF A NEW MEMBER**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, consequent to the resignation, as announced by me yesterday, of Mr. Richard Allen, the Regional Representative of Region 1, and my call, by way of letter, upon the representatives of the list of A Partnership for National Unity for that list of candidates, I have been informed by Mr. Calvin Benn, the Chief Elections Officer (Acting), by way of a letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2013, which was received by me last evening, that the name of Ms. Rennita Lolita Williams was extracted from the list and that Ms. Williams was on the 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2013 declared by Mr. Calvin Benn, in his capacity as Chief Elections Officer, as being duly elected as a Member of this National Assembly.

Before Ms. Williams can take part in the proceedings of the Assembly, she will have to make and subscribe to the Oath before this Assembly as required by Article 167 of our Constitution. As Ms. Williams is present, she can now make and subscribe to that Oath which would be administered to her by the Clerk.

*The Clerk administered the Oath to Ms. Rennita Lolita Williams.*

## **Congratulations to New Member**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, as Ms. Williams is being escorted by the Sergeant-at-Arms to her appointed seat in the National Assembly, I would like to take the opportunity to be the first to congratulate her. I met with her earlier and remarked that she is a young - perhaps I am permitted to say young - attractive member of Region 1.

**Minister of Natural Resources and Environment [Mr. R. Persaud]:** Remember what happened to President Obama.

**Mr. Speaker:** I recall what happened. It is just to welcome the new Member. I believe that Region 1 is well represented in Ms. Williams. I also want to wish you well, Ms. Williams. You have come to the Tenth Parliament at a very interesting, poignant moment. I dare say that the people of Region 1 and your party expect much of you. I hope that you are a fast learner. There are sufficient persons in the House, the Clerk, the staff of the National Assembly and, of course, your Chief Whip and other colleagues who will give you all of the guidance, advice and stewardship that you require. So, on behalf of the Parliament Office, we welcome you and look forward to getting to know you and being able to serve you as a duly elected Member of the House. I will, also, invite the Leader of the Opposition or any Member of the APNU designated by him, if he so wishes, to move, as well, congratulatory messages to the Member, bearing in mind the Obama experience as he congratulated, welcomed and greeted the Attorney General of California.

Go ahead, Sir.

**Leader of the Opposition [Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger]:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of A Partnership for National Unity, I would like to join you in welcoming Ms. Williams into this august company of Parliamentarians and into the National Assembly. It is a heavy burden. Although the circumstances of her entry were unusual, we are confident that, because of her commitment and her service in the Region, she will be able to discharge her duties at this time.

Ms. Williams comes from the Barima-Waini Region, a Region which has been plagued with several problems as you know. Three persons have died and several hundred have been made ill because of a health crisis in that area. It is a large Region, a Region that is bigger than Trinidad

and Tobago. I do not envy her, at this stage of her life, having to represent the constituents from that area. It is an area which is fraught with trafficking in persons, but it is an area of great potential, an area of gold mining, agriculture and, of course, the resumption of manganese mining. It is also an area, Mr. Speaker, as you know, which has produced... *[Interruption]* We are trying to welcome the young lady... Several parliamentarians, as you know, have already come from Moruca which is the single largest community of our indigenous people. **[Mr. R. Persaud:** What about Mr. Allen?] Oh, would you shut up please.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of the Opposition, let us keep it at a level without... Go ahead, but let us speak to each other in a better tone.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger:** I think three Hon. Members of this House also trace their origin to Moruca, the community from which Stephen Campbell came, I believe. Certainly, as you said, we expect that Ms. Williams will learn quickly, but she has much to do. We are very happy to have her on board. Welcome, Ms. Williams. *[Applause]*

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Sir, I also want to take the opportunity to welcome the young lady from Barima-Waini in the context of what transpired with Mr. Richard Allen and the context of the very difficult circumstances that we are all in at this present moment and wish her well in this Parliament, indicating to her that it is going to be extremely stressful. In the context of the circumstances, too, she will have quite a lot to learn about the politics we, in Guyana, have to indulge in. Hopefully, she will have immediately certain documents of the Parliament that will ensure that she gets acquainted with the workings and the operations of this Parliament.

Her Region is very important also for the Alliance for Change. We have gotten a number of people in that Region which we have gotten votes from. As a parliamentary representative, just like Mr. Richard Allen did, at least communicate back to those communities for purposes of ensuring that we do have the representation that those people in that Region would need.

It is important that youthful parliamentarians, especially from Indigenous regions, understand the Indigenous exercises, the culture of the people of the area which they will bring here to this Parliament. **[Mr. Neendkumar:** Are you going to give a speech now?] Do you not want me to introduce a new parliamentarian? I am very much in association with the Leader of the

Opposition on the swearing in of this... [**Members (Government):** We know that.] Are you not going to welcome the Hon. Member of Parliament?

**Mr. Speaker:** Try not to respond to gestures and any comments coming from other Members.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** It is important that we learn to appreciate that we ought to give and introduction to new Members of this Parliament and also indicate that we want a quick recovery of Mr. Richard Allen, who I understand is still in the hospital. For that reason, her replacement is all the more important because of the fact that we had that very unfortunate development here.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to end it here as regards the introduction. [*Applause*]

**Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]:** Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members, on behalf of the People's Progressive Party/Civic, I would like to extend a warm welcome to Ms. Williams, at the same time extending our best wishes to Mr. Allen for a speedy recovery.

Ms. Williams, you joined the Parliament at an intriguing time during our Budget debate, when we have come from several consecutive years of growth and development. Your Region, too, Region 1, has been leading the way in the developments we see in Port Kaituma, Moruca and Waramuri; we now have minibuses and vehicles that we did not have before. I welcome you to take part in this continuing growth and development of our country.

**Dr. Norton:** Mr. Speaker, things certainly have changed quite a lot. One might remember Stephen Campbell on the 10<sup>th</sup> September being the first Amerindian during that time to enter the National Legislature. After then, there were lots of changes with respect to Amerindians being here as Members of the National Assembly. While I do appreciate the fact that persons have mentioned this right here even today, I, being an Amerindian 100 per cent, would love, also, to express this appreciation on behalf of the other Amerindians in this august House, particularly the Minister of Foreign Affairs from Moruca.

What we must remember is that so far all three Ministers of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs are from Moruca. I am happy that Ms. Williams is also from that area. I am indeed happy and I am looking forward for the function of Ms. Williams in this august House, like that of Ms. Hastings, Ms. Marcello, Ms. Garrido-Lowe, and the honourable hero, Mr. Sidney Allicock.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Applause*]

**Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]:** Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I would just like to congratulate Ms. Rennita Williams for joining the ranks of MPs coming from that area: Stephen Campbell, his great granddaughter Pauline Sukhai, Eugene Stoby, Una James, and Vibert De Souza. We certainly had a really good lot of MPs coming from Moruca. I would also like to welcome her given that it is another woman in this National Assembly. I think that is very significant. I would not go into the percentage of my *Amerindianess*, but I conform to the Amerindian Act.

Congratulations and welcome Ms. Williams. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Ms. Williams, I can assure you that your entrance into the House today and the greetings you received are unprecedented. When I entered the House many years ago, I took the Oath, was escorted to my seat and business continued. So you would consider yourself to be very special and important and recognise that we see your coming today as something that is monumental, hence the many speeches of welcome that you received from both sides of the House. I know that you are apprehensive and that your life has been upended in a matter of hours. I know that you would have been doing something on one day and by the next you are doing another.

I did explain to you the ritual of having to host the entire Assembly at a date and time that you are in a position to do so. You would indicate to the Clerk. That aside, I do not know whether you are in a position this afternoon or feel up to it to just saying a few words in response to all the well wishes. If not, we will understand and have it on another occasion. That is fine. You do seem somewhat overwhelmed, but welcome. As I said, your presence here this afternoon by the very response that you received should tell you something.

Hon. Members, I thank you all for your kind words of support and encouragement and welcome to the Hon. Member. We will be hearing from her, I am sure, in the not too distant future as we even consider the Estimates for Region 1.

Thank you very much.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

### **Welcome of Ms. Rennita Williams**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, by way of announcement, and this, of course we have just done, I would like to congratulate the new Member.

I wish to change gears and go into a sombre mode and to just give details for Members who I know are very interested.

### **Final Rights and Cremation for the late Former Minister of Agriculture and Parliamentary Affairs Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud**

**Mr. Speaker:** The final rights and cremation for the late former Minister of Agriculture and Parliamentary Affairs, Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud, will take place tomorrow, Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> April, beginning at 9.00 a.m. The funeral procession will start at the Dharmic Sanskritik Kendra Mandir in Prashad Nagar, passing thereafter the Shri Krishna Mandir in Campbellville. It then goes to the Dharmic Rama Krishna Mandir in Barr Street, Kitty and then to Freedom House for a brief tribute at 9.30 a.m. The cortege, I believe, will then continue to the Guyana International Conference Centre in Liliendaal where the official ceremony and viewing of the body will take place at 10.00 a.m. I take it that the actual ceremony will commence sometime thereafter. Final rights and cremation will take place at the Good Hope Crematorium, I believe at 1.00 p.m.

### **REQUEST FOR LEAVE TO MOVE THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY ON DEFINITE MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

#### **Strike of Nurses in Linden**

**Mr. Speaker:** Earlier today, the Hon. Member of Region 10 contacted me about what she considered to be an urgent matter of public importance, that is pertaining to a strike of nurses in Linden at the Hospital. I advised her that the matters set out by her did not constitute, given the interpretation of the Standing Orders... [*Interruption*]

I did advise the Hon. Member, Ms. Kissoon, that the matters raised by her did not qualify as an urgent matter of public importance, given the interpretation of our Standing Orders and I could not adhere to her request to move the adjournment of the House to discuss that matter.

However, as was the case by me predecessor, Mr. Ramkarran, I did indicate that notwithstanding my refusal to grant her motion for an adjournment of the House, I would allow her to make a brief statement of two minutes at most. In keeping with Mr. Ramkarran's practices, which I, in fact, endorse, I would allow Ms. Kissoon to make a brief statement, no more than two minutes, on the matter.

**Ms. Kissoon:** Mr. Speaker, before I make my statement, I would just like to also join with my other colleagues in congratulating and welcoming Ms. Williams to this honourable House this afternoon.

The nurses of Region 10 went on strike this morning as of 8.00 a.m. because of payments of their gratuity. This matter was raised in this honourable House last Friday. In fact, I spoke to the Hon. Minister who indicated to me that the matter should not have reached this stage. The nurses were promised their moneys between Monday and yesterday. At the moment, as I speak, they have not received their gratuity. The nurses are asking that the manner in which they are paid gratuity be revised because gratuity is in lieu of pension.

I got a telephone call and was told that the moneys will be paid by 4.00 p.m. this afternoon. However, the nurses are still concerned and they want this matter resolved. Also, they want the manner in which gratuity payments are made to be dealt with once and for all because every year they are having this problem.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we are, if I may say so, in somewhat of a relaxed mode today. I am going to allow the Hon. Minister of Health to respond, if he so desires, even though there is no debate on this subject.

**Minister of Health [Dr. Ramsarran]:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me too join in welcoming the new Member and remind her too that that large Region recently got that new hospital at Mabaruma, which is doing a fairly good job. We are, at the same time in this Budget, looking at the Kaituma hospital. So things are happening in Region 1 in terms of health. As I was boasting recently in a public forum, we have teams, headed by persons such as Jeffery and so on, which are going to Mabaruma. In welcoming you, let me remind you that things are happening in the health sector and you can share that with them.

Mr. Speaker, the matter that was just allowed as something of great public interest is a simple administrative matter and the gratuity which should have been paid this month, the nurses do know, and many of them understand, that because of that administrative glitch, it will be paid shortly. The Member who raised it...and I used, while I was not on my feet, a certain word, which is a bit unparliamentary and I will not repeat, to describe her activities. This is just to gain some attention or attraction in this dog season time I would say. This is a minor...

**Mr. Speaker:** What? Mr. Minister, that comment, please withdraw it.

**Dr. Ramsarran:** Okay, Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw it.

**Mr. Speaker:** It is very discriminatory against women in particular. I can tell you that.

**Dr. Ramsarran:** I withdraw it, Mr. Speaker.

*[Mrs. Backer rose to her feet.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** It is withdrawn, Mrs. Backer.

**Dr. Ramsarran:** I withdraw that. I am saying that at these moments surrounding the Budget, when there is political capital needed to be gained... This is a simple administrative matter that could be handled and that is being handled. Most of the nurses are being on the side of the administration, understanding this; it is a gratuity that needed to be paid in one month and the nurses were advised that it will be paid. It is in the process of being done. The Permanent Secretary is doing a very good job to get that done.

As Ms. Kissoon pointed out, the nurses were promised a certain time. I do not know exactly which hour they were promised but the Ministry of Health is regretful of this and the nurses have been so told. This could have been resolved as a simple administrative matter between employer and employee, and it does not deserve the attention as something of national significance.

Although we do empathise with the nurses – they need their moneys and I spoke with Ms. Kissoon and said, “Yes, it should not have happened,” – it is an administrative glitch. It will be treated as such and steps will be taken to see that those who might be at fault are reprimanded and that it is not repeated. It is a fairly simple matter.



I thank the nurses in Linden for being very understanding with that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much Minister. That was excellent. Thank you. I think it is of great comfort and assurance to the nurses. I urge Members to try to speak and have dialogue with each other. I know it works. I believe one Member, during the debate, did refer to the fact that we need to avoid using the public's time to deal with matters that could be dealt with privately if so. I urge that we dialogue privately between the sides to resolve matters.

## **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

### **GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS**

#### **MOTION**

#### **REPORT OF THE BUSINESS SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we are in that stage in Government's Business. This morning we adjourned the House to 2.00 p.m. today after we were unable to have agreement or resolution, in fact, on a motion before the House, coming from the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply. Standing Order 74 (4) states that if the motion is negatived, as it was last evening – not carried – it shall stand recommitted to the Business Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee met at 1.30 p.m. this afternoon. The parties discussed the causes and effects and even consequences of last evening's outcome. As Chairman, I indicated that I would recommit that Report to the Committee of Supply when we reconvene.

*2.39 p.m.*

*Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.*

*In Committee of Supply*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we are now constituted as a Committee of Supply. As indicated last evening, the Standing Orders never contemplated a situation in which the Minister in charge of finance would not and did not agree with the majority view of the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply. I believe that for me to ask and call on the Minister to move a motion

that he doth agree would be a manifest absurdity and is not something that I would encourage just for the sake of causing him to do so.

In that sense, I propose, as I did last night, that the Report, as circulated last night, stands before the House as well as, running alongside it, the Minority Report which is a second schedule prepared by the Government. I will propose the adoption of the Report with the schedule prepared by the Opposition parties, A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) and the Alliance For Change (AFC), in the first instance, and, depending on the outcome of that, I will put the second.

I propose that the Report dated 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2013, with the schedule attached reflecting the views and opinions of APNU and the AFC Members in the House be adopted.

*Question put.*

**Ms. Teixeira:** Division.

**Mr. Chairman:** A division has been called. Please sound the bell.

*Division bell rang.*

*Assembly divided as follow: Ayes 33, Noes 31.*

Ayes

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Ms. R. Williams

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. 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. Persaud

Dr. Singh

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Hinds

*Report adopted.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, I did indicate, as well, that I will put the minority Report, the Government's Report and schedule to the House for its adoption, notwithstanding the recent vote.

*Question put.*

**Mr. Hinds:** Division.

*Assembly divided as follow: Noes 33, Ayes 31.*

Noes

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Ms. R. Williams

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. 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. Ramsarran

Dr. Westford

Mr. R. Persaud



Dr. Singh

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Hinds

*Report negatived.*

*Assembly resumed.*

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Clerk advises that there is no other business for today. That brings us to the end of our business very early and completely.

I invite the Hon. Prime Minister to move the motion for our adjournment.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the House be adjourned until Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2013 at 2.00 p.m. when we will proceed with the consideration of the Budget Estimates.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Members. I am grateful for your patience, your presence this afternoon and your assistance in getting us through what appeared, just hours ago, to be an impossible path.

The House is adjourned until Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2013 at 2.00 p.m.

*Assembly adjourned accordingly at 2.50 p.m.*