

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2010) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

116TH Sitting

Monday, 22ND February, 2010

The Assembly convened at 2.10 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2010 - MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2010.

“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 the Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2010 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2010-02-08;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2010, of a total sum of one hundred and twenty-five billion, five and sixty-eight million, five hundred and seventy-three thousand dollars (\$125,568,573,000), excluding seventeen billion, two hundred and seven million, and twenty-six thousand dollars (\$17,207,026,000) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the under mentioned 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.

Mrs. Riehl: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I wish to add my voice in congratulating our newest Members to this National Assembly that is: Mrs. Dawn Hastings and Mr. Lloyd Pareira. As I speak, we are all aware, that they have already wet their feet, so to speak, in fine style. We look forward to many more meaningful contributions as they bring the problems and insights of their areas to bear on matters in this National Assembly.

Before I go into my presentation, I wish to correct a statement made by the Hon. Attorney General when he made his presentation on the Budget. He said to this Hon. Assembly words to the effect that it was the Opposition who caused the delay in the consideration of the Court of Appeal Amendment Bill, which was out into a Select Committee since 2008. Nothing can be farther from the truth. Select Committees on Bills, as you are aware, are chaired by the subject ministers who convene all meetings of these Committees. The fact that no meeting was convened before his calling, one has nothing to do with the Opposition and everything to do with his predecessor in office. The P.N.C.R. Members of this Committee were all present at seven of the eight meetings of this Select Committee which is chaired and which is called by this incumbent Hon. Attorney General. A letter was sent on behalf of all the P.N.C. Members about our inability to attend the 8th Meeting. This, notwithstanding, the Hon. Attorney General having established a quorum proceeded to deliberate on that Bill. I just want to set that record straight because I heard him distinctly say, and I checked with my colleagues and they all verified – myself, Mrs. Backer and Mr. Williams are the three P.N.C.R. Members – and we took great umbrage to that statement that we are the cause for that delay of a Select Committee which should have started since 2008, having said that, I wish to commence with my short presentation.

If I were not a Guyanese and I was handed a copy of Guyana's Constitution to get an insight into the workings of this country, I would have come away with a very favourable impression that this is a democratic country with the requisite checks and balances in place, that must inure to the well being of a citizenry and the overall progress of the county itself. Alas, I am a Guyanese and with knowledge a forehand when I peruse our Constitution I find that all the institutions therein that are meant to protect the welfare of our citizens against the might of the state are either non-existent or non-functioning. There is no Human Rights Commission although article 212G (1) states that there is one and article 212N states that:

“...it shall promote the observance of and respect for, and protect and investigate violations of the rights recognised by this constitution and any other law relating to equality of opportunity and treatment.”

No Human Rights Commission has ever been established since the constitutional amendments made that provision. There is no Ombudsman although articles 191 through 197 make provision for this office. It has been without an incumbent for seven years now. There is no Public Procurement Commission although articles 212W to 212EE states that one should be in place.

“...to monitor public procurement and the procedure thereof in order to ensure that the procurement of goods and services and the execution of works are conducted in a fair, equitable, transparent and cost effective manner.”

There is no Public Service Appellate Tribunal although article 215A makes provision for one. This tribunal was functioning until the year 2005 when, I think it was the Government's Member, Mr. Fong now deceased, was taken out and made Head of the Public Service Commission where upon the tribunal ceased to function and has not functioned since. What this tells us, is that this is an Administration which feels that it can do no wrong. So there is no need for such entities which seek to redress grievances on behalf of the citizens against the state or an arm of the State. Take for example the office of the Ombudsman. The mission statement says that

“The Ombudsman guarantees protection to members of the public against the abuse or misuse of power by the bureaucracy.”

This is contained in volume 2 of the Estimates.

In my 2008 budget speech, I had indicated that I had, had a conversation with the then outgoing Ombudsman and he had indicated his frustrations in office that he was largely ignored by the Government. He was given no budget for investigators although his office required this. He was getting no replies to letters and calls made to many Ministries. Notwithstanding all of this, here are a few samples of some of the matters dealt with as documented in his last Report to the National Assembly before he demitted office in 2003, I believe.

I wish to read some of these. It is headed: Report of the Office of the Ombudsman for the Year 2002. This was the last that he laid in the Parliament and it is headed: *Selective Complaints Summary* – the first one: Guyana Revenue Authority. The subheading: Guyana Revenue Authority Tells a Lie to Dismiss One of its Officers. I would not read it; time does not permit me to read all of this but I will read a little as I go along, Sir. This was a complainant who was dismissed. One enquiry by his then boss, Mr. Marks found of no fault, was guilty of no malpractices whereupon another enquiry with a Mr. Dwarka found him guilty of some fraud or something. And Mr. S. Y. Mohamed, the then ombudsman, said this:

“The authority did not comply with my recommendations. It sought the advice of the Hon. Attorney general who advised, without giving any reason, that the complainant should institute proceedings to challenge his dismissal. I asked the authority to give me a copy of the advice of the Hon. Attorney General. It replied by saying that the advice of the Hon. Attorney General was given orally. I spoke to and wrote the Hon. Attorney General to review his oral advice. He promised to do so but did not. An officer of the Attorney General Chamber spoke to me on the telephone and told me she was looking into the matter. I did not hear from her again although I reminded her of her promise on the telephone.”

Region 4 – Non-payment for work done.

“Complainant says he entered into a contract with Region 4 to do certain work to the value of \$159,000. However, the work actually done by the complainant covered a larger percentage of ground. He sought my assistance. I wrote the Regional Executive Officer who said that the complainant was not authorised to do the extra work and refuse to pay the additional amount. I advised the complainant to consult a lawyer. I do not know whether he did but the third party informed me that the Region subsequently settled the matter with him.”

Failure to issue medical certificate: Guyana Oil Company.

“Complainant was stationed at Providence. He complains he was sick in December, 2001. GUYOIL did not forward his medical certificates to N.I.S. for him to uplift his sickness benefit. I informed the complainant of the above. I did not hear from him. I believe his problems have been solved.”

And so the litany of interventions by the Ombudsmen – this is just a small sample even without his investigators. This one concerns reallocation of house lots.

“Complainant was allocated a house lot in the housing scheme on the east Bank of Demerara. He paid the full sum of \$58,000 and later the transport fee of \$12,000. He claims that in February, 2001 he was forcibly dispossessed of his lot which was given to another person. He complained to me. I wrote the Ministry which assured me that he would be relocated. He was subsequently allocated the very house lot and signed the agreement of sale.”

As I said, time does not permit me to go through this whole litany of complaints and variety of complaints which the ombudsman handled and documented in his last Report.

Mr. Speaker, many persons are suffering from many forms of inequities or downright discrimination in this society today and have nowhere to turn. Having these bodies and place functioning is a major aspect of good governance, and I call upon this Administration to move expeditiously to constitute these Constitutional bodies: the Human Rights Commission, the public Procurement Commission, the Public Service Appellate Tribunal and the Office of the Ombudsman.

There is no point paying... and I think the Budget year after year regurgitates paying support staff. There is still some skeleton staff – secretary, etcetera – being paid while these offices are not functioning. I think that, that is, if I may say so, a waste of taxpayers’ money.

I now turn to the Guyana Government I.D.B. Justice Sector Reform Programme. This is a four-year Programme which started in the year 2006 and comes to an end this very year, 2010. This is why I am asking a direct question: where are the tangible results of this project? One year after the 2009 Budget virtually everything remains the same. I can get away with rereading my 2009 Budget contribution without going wrong. Whatever the consultations yielded, implementation under this Programme has been slow to materialise. From 2007 to

date every Budget speech has touted this Programme as a panacea for cutting out the inefficiencies and improving the quality and delivery of justice. Listen to what is said in the 2007 Budget Speech:

“The Government is currently implementing a \$5 billion justice sector reform strategy for the modernisation of the Justice Administration System. This project aims to deal with the challenges facing the justice sector and would help to strengthen the accountability and administrative efficiency of service delivery in the justice sector.”

2008 Budget Speech:

“This is a \$10.2 million programme aimed at improving the quality, efficiency, and efficacy of service delivery in the justice sector institutions, and improving access to justice for our citizens.”

2009 Budget Speech:

“Over \$1.8 billion has been budgeted for the operation, modernisation and strengthening of our judicial system in 2009. In addition to continuing the upgrade of facilities, a number of initiatives will be implemented at modernising Justice Administration and the environment of the courts to operate with the objective of ensuring timely dispensing of justice.”

2010 Budget Speech:

“As part of the overall reform and modernisation of the Judiciary, Government would consolidate its efforts towards transformation of the Judicial System. A total of \$1.7 billion has been budgeted in 2010 to improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of service delivery in the justice sector.”

Words, words and more words. In the mean time, two high Court Judges, Justice Jainarine Singh and Justice LeBennett, out of a complement of 12 inclusive of the Chief, retired in 2008 and in 2009 respectively, and have yet to be replaced. Our High Court needs a complement of at least 15 judges, I have said repeatedly, to service the country because now... the High Court in Essequibo and in Berbice. In the mean time prisoners incarcerated for five and six years awaiting trial have begun to file Constitutional Motions in the very High Court on the premise that justice delayed is justice denied. In the mean time the criminal sessions open with over 60 cases listed and only two judges presiding. One case with

four accusers is likely to last an entire criminal January session because there are four accused and the issues there, I understand, will take the whole January and even go over into some of the time for the April session. In the meantime the backlog grows and civil matters filed as far back as 1997/1998 are only now being heard. How can a project with its stated objective to approve the efficiency of service delivery in the justice system itself be so slothful in effecting the necessary changes to bring this about? This is the end of the four years that this project was in being and nothing has materialised. For all the billions of Guyana I.D.B. Project Fund, nothing has materialised besides the Family court.

Another component of this Programme is the introduction of new Civil Procedure Rules for the High Court which rules, we were told in last year's Budget, were being subjected to consultation. I could vouch for that because I did attend consultations about these rules at the Ocean View Convention Centre. In this year's Budget we are told that the draft guidelines for these rules were circulated to judges for their views. No one knows when these rules will come into effect. I ask the question, how long must the gestation period be for these rules? The court connected mediation, as practised in the High Court at present, is an optional step that can suspend a civil case on its journey for final adjudication before a judge. The case is taken out of the system temporarily by a judge on his or her volition, or at the request of the council. If the mediation is successful, that is the end of the case. If not, the case goes back to the judge for trial. I do not know, what is the Government's strategic plan for mediation as stated in the Budget? I am in agreement that mediation as a means of breaking the backlog of cases can help immensely. I would like to recommend the following - take a cut off year, say 2006:

1. All civil cases filed prior to 2006 to be sent to mandatory mediation even as we wait the new civil procedure rules. Mediation would immediately weed out the percentage of the cases that will ultimately end up at trial. Although we do not have it mandatory, I am saying that we could do things.
2. Mediation centres be established in all three counties: Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice to encourage pre-litigation mediation so that citizens may move to settle their disputes without even filing their court action.

There are 70 trained mediators on the roaster at the Mediation Centre at Georgetown, 29 of who are lawyers, the others being other professionals and members of civil society so there is no lack of mediators. Mediation is a process that is more and more being utilised in the wider

Caribbean and the wider world. It is taught as a subject in our law school. We are told that in the U.S.A. a mere 17 percent of all civil cases filed actually go to trial. The larger percent is settled out of court either by mediation or arbitration. In that country also mediation is practised at the level of the schools upwards. The value of pre-litigation mediation cannot be overemphasised. It helps to preserve relationships and to preserve cohesions in villages and communities.

I wish to commend the Administration for the planned introduction of a digital speech recording system for our Supreme Court and Court of Appeal.

It is a welcome and long overdue reform which would assist greatly in speeding up the pace at which a case moves during trial. I have always recommended that. Some may call it Dictaphone and I am very happy that the Government has moved. I only hope that this fructify because they say it is supposed to be a pilot project, and I wonder why a pilot. Why not just introduce it? It is all over the world as Mr. Murray said. You can see it in the movies; this little lady sitting there recording everything. It is the best form of really hearing and understanding what goes on in the court. Otherwise you have to depend on the judges hand-written notes. The judge is only human. He or she many times misses parts of the evidence and what the judge does not record is not evidence.

Last year 10,032 bail applications were filed in the High Court from magistrates' denial of bail to persons appearing before them. These are the Georgetown Magistrates. One reads in the newspapers defendants of the most common place of offences such as common assault being denied bail and remanded to prison. Obviously some magistrates are oblivious to the correlation between their almost automatic denial of pre-trial liberty and what is happening at the Georgetown prison. The prison is bursting at its seams as it tries to cope with twice the number of persons it was built to accommodate. The overcrowding is particularly bad at the remand section of the prison we are told. Sir, some functionary, perhaps the Chancellor, need to advise the magistrates to utilise their discretion to grant bail and also to remind them that the remand should not be used as a penalty. That is what I was always told during my days. We were always told at Magistrates' Conferences that a remand must not be used as a penalty. The fact that an estimated 90 percent of those applications to the High Court were granted, shows that bail ought to have been granted in the first instance by the magistrates.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to highlight some irregularities at the Ministry of Legal Affairs as contained in the Auditor General's report for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2007, and

the concomitant recommendations of the Auditor General. It must be emphasised that these irregularities did not occur under the watch of the current Attorney General but I am bringing them up so that this incumbent, Hon. Attorney General, would cause them to be corrected. On page 119 of the Auditor General's Report, December, 2007 at para. 332:

“The state solicitors bank account no. 120 was last reconciled for December, 2005, even though the bank account had a balance of \$50.844 million as at 31st December, 2007.”

In relation to the cash book, this was last written up on 22nd April, 2009:

“Several unsatisfactory features were observed. In this regard the bank and cash columns were not segregated in order to separately identify sums on hand, and disposal of such collections by either cash payments or deposits to the bank account. This was compounded by a failure to initial deletions of entries, including evidence of supervisory checks. There were also omissions of amounts totalling \$984,924 which were collected on the 4th October, 2007, video receipts 566040-043, vouchers for payments on the accounts were also not serially numbered.”

The recommendation is that the Ministry take immediate action to have the bank account reconciled with a view to identifying errors affecting their account while ensuring the cashbook identifying transactions as and when they occur and includes evidence of supervisory checks carried out during a given period. That is for the state solicitors. The official receivers bank account is of the same problems and again this same recommendation.

“The Audit office recommends that the Ministry take similar action as was advised for the state solicitor's account.”

The public trustee's bank account which had a balance of \$2.35 million was last reconciled in December, 2005. In relation to the cash book, this was reported lost. However, the ministry is currently trying to reconstruct this record and have succeeded up to March, 2007.

2.40 p.m.

“The Ministry of Legal Affairs is seeking external advice...”

This is the Ministry's response

“...an assistance in having the bank account reconciled as well as corresponding cash book and ledger be brought up to date in correct manner. This bank account was identified in previous year’s audit.”

This is the litany. All of these accounts that have problems the last sentence is always saying that this bank account was identified in previous years audit queries. The Auditor General recommends that the Ministry take immediate action to complete the reconstruction of the cash book, so that the reconciliation of the bank account could be brought up to date.

And one final note, this one must be read:

Current Years Matters: Its heading Current Rate Matters and it is Paragraph 342. “The basis of the award for three contracts to security firms that resulted in expenditure totalling \$8.913 million for the period under review was not determined. Further, the agreements for the security services were not provided to enable the completeness and accuracy of the expenditure to be validated.

Recommendation: The Audit Office Recommends that the Ministry institute measures to ensure that the requirement of the Public Procurement Act 2003 is followed in relation to all the expenditure incurred annually and evidence of this retained.

And this last one Sir,

“For the period under review there were 8 payment vouchers totalling \$6.421 million not presented for audit scrutiny. In the circumstances the propriety of these payments could not be determined or whether value was received for the sum expended. There are also 13 payment vouchers valued \$14.4 million for the previous accounting period.”

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Member.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move that the Hon. Member be given 5 minutes to conclude her presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. Riehl: Thank you, Sir. In the related matter an examination of the vouchers that were provided revealed evidence that suggested the existence of poor segregation of duties. In that, one officer was observed to have conducted interrelated activities such as signing, certifying and approving payments without casting aspersions on that officer. Such internal control

should be segregated to illuminate the weakness observed and the possibility of loss through fraud and embezzlement. This is where I stop.

Sir, the messy state of these accounts speak for themselves but I urge this Administration to be better stewards of tax payers' money that they use.

We cannot in all fairness say that this Administration in its 17 years has not achieved anything but their focus has always been on material things, such as: building roads and bridges and infrastructure without looking at the interest of the people. Our focus on this side of the House has always been more on the people. And that is why this budget has nothing in it for the people; no empowerment for the people. The people cannot eat the road and they cannot eat the buildings and that is why our people are leaving. Now they are not going so much to the U.S. and Canada, they are going to the Caribbean and they are sending money back home for their relatives to fix houses and do things like that, which they cannot do in their own country. I say to this Administration, be balanced in your focus. You have to attend to the people's interest. You have to empower the people by paying better wages and salaries and not taxing them to the hilt. Thank you, Sir. [Applause]

Mr. Franklin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all I would like to also welcome the new Members, Hastings and Pereira, to the Parliament and hope that they truly have a fruitful sojourn in this Assembly.

Dr. Ashni Singh, I expect him to deliver a well read Budget so I would not congratulate him on that. That is something I expect him to do. In 2008, I think, the shortest Budget Speech was made by me when I rose and said that "the Ayes have it" And sat back down. Possibly I can do the same thing now because we know that the 'Ayes' would have it but I am going to bore you a little bit with a few comments on the Budget presented.

"A National Budget should be more than just a statement of income and expenditure, debt and reserves. A National Budget should be able to stimulate the imagination of its citizens of a country allowing them to form a picture of their immediate future, medium and long-term goals."

That was Budget presentation 2007. I think the same sentiment can be expressed today. If we in this House, attempt to answer the questions of where our citizens would want to be. I am sure we would have two sets of answers depending on which side of the House we sit. It is

our duty to do our utmost to satisfy the needs of our people regardless of where they are, what place they are set in our society. That should be our motivation in this House.

Does this Budget go far enough? I keep hearing how poor we are and the means we have but you know there is something called innovation, collaboration and using the best brains that are available inside and outside of the country to maximize what we have for the benefit of our people. That too is part of governing. I dare say we have not gone far enough out of the box, so to speak, to attain the results we require to satisfy the most urgent needs, short and longer term aspirations of our people. Our population, being what it is, requires something grand over a short period of time to lift us out of this cycle of poverty. Micro-projects alone will not do it. With the tiny population that we have it is not a viable option to lift us out of poverty. This requires foresight, inclusiveness and a certain type of bravery not exhibited so far we must encourage innovative thought and action. We cannot ever hope to join the rest of the developed world by training hair dressers, cake bakers and manicurists and proudly quote these figures as a statistic for job creation.

In a Budget where unemployment and underemployment figures are conspicuously absent, it just reinforces the sense that this may be, and I say again, may be another job done on the Guyanese people. How many school leavers were gainfully employed in 2009 and what steps are being undertaken to create real jobs for those who have left school in that same year? This is what we the people need to know. By having our students do 15 subjects without a comprehensive integrated plan as to where we seek to be in 10 or 20 years, totally ad hoc. And then we train an abundance of public administrators and tiny quantities of Scientists, Agriculturalists and Engineers, skills that we require to create industries for real development, no fairytale business. There seems to be no comprehensive plan. If there is one in the Budget of 2010 it is very unclear. Investment in infrastructure is absolutely required and necessary but so is investment in human capital. Are we satisfied that we are doing enough, getting value for money so to speak and not the figure but value for money?

Do we have a plan? We did not hear this from the very vocal now Minister of Labour, when he had his chance he was very quiet on that and now he seeks to make some noise. Be quiet my friend. In order for us to get out of this state, we know that to produce affordable power is absolutely crucial. Not much was said about this within the Budget and if we do have a plan I am sure that our nation is waiting anxiously to see how we are going to get out of this vicious

cycle of not being able to produce efficiently enough so that we can compete on the International market. Very little was said about such a crucial part of our economy.

In 1992, and I am going to go back because on the Government side they have a propensity for going way back to compare what was and what is... There is nothing wrong with that if you limit it to a small section of your overall argument. It seems to be the only argument. I would like to see the government compare what they have done in the 18 years that they have been in Government. You do not compare yourself with the worst and if the P.N.C. was the worst at that time it is time now to compare with the best or better. It is like in school the ugliest girl in the class used to look for even an uglier girl next door so that she could look good. I would hope that, with the rebasing of our statistics it would be more sensible to start comparing economic targets and economic gains with that rebased economy from the year 2006. I think we might make a lot more sense.

In 1992 this country was euphoric about a change of Government. We all knew what Dr. Jagan stood for. We may not have agreed with his political philosophy or parts of it but we expected peace and prosperity to prevail partly because most people believed he held this Country very close to his heart. I still believe that. But more importantly he understood that the Constitution forced on this country by some of the very worst parts of the P.N.C. was cunningly crafted to concentrate all power in the hands of a supreme leader. I think he was well aware of this and promised to change. I just wonder why that promise was never fulfilled on such an important commitment.

It is well known that one of the main functions of Government is to ensure the safety of its citizens and that justice prevails. In the interactions between citizens it is also important for Government to provide social services to the less fortunate and ensure healthcare is available.

Investment in education is important since an educated citizenry can contribute far more to the economic and social life of the country in general but we must know to what end. When we deal with the economy the role of the Government should be to ensure fair play and to do whatever it can to encourage the private and other sectors to produce consistent with good order and preservation of the environment. It is the role of the private sector to produce goods and services especially to provide employment. This sector must be encouraged to invest their profits in Guyana to provide even more goods and services to our people but this Government has failed signally to creatively incentivize effective financial intermediation in the direction of productive endeavours and therefore creating jobs.

Instead this Government has created an incentive for banks to lend money purely for consumption rather than investment. Risk aversion is the order of the day. The spread between interest paid and interest charged by banks is symptomatic of the twisted system. The stability experienced now in this economy, at this time, is partly due to the lack of investment opportunities and the level of unaccounted moneys in the economy filling the foreign exchange needs of commerce and trade whenever and wherever required. Not one word was mentioned about the parallel economy and its effect on our legitimate business. Not one word was mentioned in the Budget. Have we now acknowledged that this is no longer parallel but part of our economy? I hope not. This Budget makes no provision to encourage investment, no incentive for citizens to invest and create badly needed jobs. Instead of encouragement to invest there is the heaviest tax burden in the Western hemisphere that almost extorts earnings to be spent not by those who earned it, the people, giving them back the money to spend into the economy but by the rulers as they see fit – something like a “Pradocracy”.

And what of the main function of Government to ensure the safety of its citizens? We have a police force that gets increased allocations – very good – year after year but parallel to these increases we see a mountain of abuse of power; yes, even torture, as well as sometimes downright robbery and shakedowns against our citizens all over this country. There is no value for money here.

The point is not how much we spend but how and where we spend it and what the measurable outcomes are. That is more important than the actual figure. What are we getting for the moneys spent on these sectors? It does provide increased funds for the police but it is meaningless if we cannot ensure that our people are protected against the criminals within as well as those outside of the Police Force. Please do not burn us anymore.

This Budget is one that comes out of a Government operating under this Constitution and you cannot blame the Government alone because the Constitution places power in the hands of basically only one individual. That individual will ensure that they have financial power. That is the power to dictate how the wealth created by the working people of this country is spent. It will be spent to entrench the status quo, the ‘yes men’ and keep them in the position of supreme power. Let us not be fooled by the fairytales and fiction. These expenditures, that will be passed in this Assembly can and will be changed at the whim of this Government. This Constitution gives too much leeway to any President – not *this* President, to any

President – to do whatever he or she wants. This cannot go on like that. Without a change in the Constitution that limits the power of the presidency, without a change that distributes power to appropriate institutions what is the significance of the Budget. It will always be subjected to abuse and we will end up with a “Pretendocracy”.

During the debate we often heard the talk of not enough consultation and no consultation. The Government side defended stoutly and said “We have consulted widely with our people as we go out on outreaches, that maybe so. If that is so and you are convinced that you have done your job in brining the message and actually understanding the people who you represent then why are we here now. To ‘rubberstamp’ something that was well sorted out before, to me is a waste of time. The haphazardness of our strategies, the National Development Strategy, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Competitiveness Strategy and the Low-Carbon Development Strategy. We need a strategy to navigate through these strategies. We seem to have lost our way and whatever is in vogue at the particular time that is what we pick up and run with but that is not how a structured well positioned Government ought to act. The people must be able to see what linkages there are in these strategies. If we are getting rid of some let us get rid of some. Let us have something comprehensive that both you and our people understand.

We are now at the Low-Carbon Development Strategy which I, in general, totally agree with. The low carbon development path means that you operate efficiently, use resources that you have well and you deal with your environment in such a way that it will be there for generations to come. Excellent, we must do so recognizing the fact that whatever gains we may get from such a strategy, in the present prevailing International condition, that is only convenient when it suites the people who are giving. We cannot afford to put all of our eggs in that proverbial basket and forget that unless we take charge of our own destiny we are going to be conned just like we were conned with the sugar protocol being swept from under us. It was not any gift. That was a contract, as far as I am concerned. They took it away when it did not suit them and we “balled” and we cried and we still seem to be carried away with believing that everyone else has our interest at heart. They do not, and I think the reason that we operate that way is because we do not even trust ourselves. We do not even trust people right here at home. [Mr. Ramotar: Speak for yourself.] Who the cap fits... they talk quick. I just put the cap right down here and the Hon. Member grabbed it so hungrily. It fit perfectly.

In this Budget with all that was spent, time, effort, money, on the low carbon strategy. Very little, minuscule, amounts of time or some sort of pattern was established. For the rest of the economy to support this strategy; nothing in terms of our education and in terms of what we really need in a few years to support that strategy as being the one that we are running with. Where is the investment in science and technology at our secondary and tertiary institutions? Absent!

I want to accept that the Government means well. I do believe that they mean well but they must understand that no matter how much they think they can do it alone they cannot. You need the involvement of all the people, all of the resources, all of the minds at our disposal to do this thing right. But if the Government truly feels that they can go it alone there is nothing that any opposition could do. The problem with that is that the entire population feels the squeeze, feels the pain and suffers, and that we ought not to let happen.

There are competing interests for the very Low Carbon Development Strategy. Business and Politics News, there is an article by Christine Lepisto, written in Berlin in May 2008, and this is the heading:

“Carbon sequestration and storage in soils could solve global warming.”

In other words: soils can also hold, can be a sink and if you plough and manipulate it, just like how our forests act as storage for carbon soils, it can do the same. This is a report done by the Food and Agricultural Association of the United Nations outlining the figures of what is possible. So, even with the very brave and commendable steps of selling our forests - let me take that back, because ‘selling’ is not the word - offering our forest to the world for environmental services, because the same markets understand that it may be possible to get money from technologies that sequest carbon. They have already started, and it is on soils where you have nothing grown; poor soils. They have estimated that increasing the carbon content by only 1.5 tons per hectare on two billion hectares of degraded lands could balance out predicted increases in CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere due to annual emissions.

3.10 p.m.

This would buy time while fossil fuel free technologies are developed. That is what we are going to be competing with. And when these technologies are developed in those countries what do you think we would be getting down the road?

In 2009 I submitted a series of suggestions, and because they are still relevant, with some adjustment I will attempt to do the same again.

I really believe that if we are truly to have a discussion on our economy, our Budget. It would be prudent and really advisable that in advance of a budget being presented, we can use the media. I would suggest you use the Chronicle because you would get some sales for it - to print what the budget is expected to be. Have discussions raging out there, so that all people would have an opportunity to scrutinize and make suggestions before any final document is prepared.

Government boasted that there are no new taxes. But I do not think because there are no new taxes levied it means you are doing well. Taxation could be used to effect positive change in different parts of the economy. I suggest that an environmental tax on all plastic and Styrofoam containers be levied; not just soft drinks because that is what is in place right now. The tax should be used exclusively to improve the environment throughout the country - because that is where I think we have a problem - in city, town and village councils, to promote sound environmental practices country wide and encourage efficient use all available resources.

Mr. Speaker: Time is up Hon. Member.

Mrs. Holder: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move that the Hon Member be given 5 minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Franklin: Thank you. The Hon Minister Mr. Lall spoke about the wanton disposal of waste around the country, which we are all aware of, and of oil being dumped. The Government itself must put something in place. There is nothing in place to deal with waste oil which can be used in power generating plants. You are using heavy fuel with very, very little effort, and savings can accrue while cleaning up the environment. These savings could be used in Hon. Member Manickchand's area to support subsidised families and raise our pensions, because it is significant savings.

I say again, we should ban the importation of used tyres. Why are we importing other people's waste? We are talking low carbon and sensible environmental practices but we import a load of junk, year after year. We should ban these tyres and it would encourage... in

the long run you save money. I challenge anyone. The life of a new tyre, notwithstanding the safety aspects and the environmental cost of disposal, outweighs the importation of cheap nonsense. You see some of our friends are the biggest importers of used tyres. This thing is not about friends, it is what is best for this Country.

I must say, we should also not ban, raise taxes on imported alcohol and tobacco. The moneys so gained, is to increase the pay of nurses and other workers that require a salary increase. There is money there. But there again we have friends who are importing these things.

I must say in the area of sewage and water there have been positive movement. Although it is not optimal, if you have been fetching water for years and now you get water in your house that is an improvement. I commended the Government and hope that eventually all areas would be serviced. I must say at this stage that the Hon Minister of Housing and Water did take on a suggestion which was laid at his feet to review the contracts that were issued for the sewage pumps in Georgetown. This he has done and I understand significant savings - in the millions, have occurred. That is what I mean. If we collaborate on issues that have a positive effect on our people, everyone benefits. Therefore I do believe that none of us have the monopoly on intelligence and brains. My friend is not here, so I cannot really make a proper statement.

I do hope that in the not too distant future we will understand that we are here for the benefit of the people and would hope that the Government would be a little braver in extending and opening the door for meaningful suggestions that would end up benefitting all our citizens. That is what I hope for. I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

Mr. Ramotar: Mr. Speaker, I would like to join my colleagues who spoke before me in congratulating the Minister of Finance and his staffs for presenting us with a Budget that I believe is the basis for advancing our Country. I wish also to join with all the colleagues who spoke in welcoming the two new Members to the Chamber. And I wish that their stay here would be very productive.

I also wish to note Sir, that we are debating this budget at some very important period of time in our history. This is the 40th anniversary of our Republic, and it is also the 60th Anniversary of the People's Progressive Party, the Party that pioneered the struggle for independence, and even for Republican status in our society.

Before, I go directly into my presentation. I want to respond to something that the Hon. Member Mr. Franklin just said. But not only Mr. Franklin but several speakers from the Opposition benches keep raising the issue that we are operating under a Constitution that was the 1980 Constitution. They are completely neglecting to say, that we have had a process in this Country where we had set up a new constituent assembly in which you, Sir, chaired. The former Hon. Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Haslyn Parris was the Secretary/Head of the Secretariat. There were other respected people like Mr. Miles Fitzpatrick on it. Millions of dollars were spent going all over this Country to take evidence from people far and wide, to produce a new Constitution in which the power of the President has been reduced. And I argue today that the President of Guyana has no more power than any other President in the world today. Yet this thing is repeated over and over and my good friend Lance, the Hon. Member Mr. Carberry, would say "go bells" type of tactics. We should avoid these "go bells" type of repetition of repeating the wrong things all the time.

I like to make a note that since this budget came out three Monday ago, one of the interesting things to note is that the main stakeholders in our society have not been saying anything negative about this budget that we have; neither labour nor business have come out with any strong objection to this budget we have.

I wish to note too, that the Caribbean Development Bank singled out Guyana for praise, for the Country's economic performance in 2009, taking into consideration all that has happened in the Caribbean and the World today. Giving us high marks for the work we have done with our economy. I wish to contrast this mainly at the period of time when the P.N.C. was in office. When we were expecting the budget it was always a time of anxiety. When we had consumers and shopkeepers hoarding because we did not know where the taxes were coming from to hit us, and hit us hard. Today, what we are experiencing is a kind of stability and predictability that is characteristic of our economy, since the P.P.P./C. has been managing our society.

The 2010 Budget is one in my view that is intended to continue to put in place programmes and plans to realise the vision of the P.P.P./Civic administration. I hear very often, the Opposition criticising the Budget, saying that the budget lacks the vision. The Budget is not a document for vision. The P.P.P./Civic has established its vision in 1992, 1997, 2001 and 2006. I just want to repeat it because it seems as if you have some very hard heads in the Opposition benches. The Budget has plans to realise these visions. And from time to time

emphasis might change; policies might change, because we are living in a world that is constantly changing. Therefore we expect from time to time that the Budget will change.

Our vision to build a modern society in which all our people can enjoy a high standard of living, a society without poverty, where social justice and equal opportunity for all exist, is still the main focus of the P.P.P./Civic Government. Visions don't change with every Budget. These are task that we have set ourselves and that is what we are working towards. All our budgets have been oriented to achieve these goals. Emphasis as I said would change from time to time, but generally, that is the direction that we're going. That can be seen from the expenditure we have in all the budgets that we placed before this National Assembly since 1993.

Let me go right into some of the criticisms that the Hon. Members from the other side have been making. For instance, there is a lot of criticism from the Opposition benches to the I.T. strategy of the Government, the fact that we are bringing in other cable into our Country. There has been a lot of criticism about that. One member went so far as to see that we should not make attempts to try to see every home having computers.

In the world that we live in today, it is very important... we have said from the beginning, even when our telephone company was privatised, that we needed to have a society in which we try to avoid as far as possible to have monopolies. We were critical of the P.N.C. Government for creating the telephone company into a private monopoly. That was one of the main criticisms we had with the deal to sell our telephone company. If GT&T would be the only company to bring a cable into our society, that would be entrenching a monopoly in our country.

That would have been possible but the privatisation agreement that you went into has prevented us from going into private companies. Therefore, if we are going to break the monopoly, the only organisation, the only force that can do that in our society is the Government. **[Member:** That is not true.] That is true. That is how the privatisation agreement has been structured, and that is why I say it is very important for us to be able to break this monopoly. Because in economics - I know the Hon. Member Mr. Murray is a veteran Economist, and he would appreciate that monopoly is not always the best means within our society - if you want to have monopolies, the best means for it is in government.

Developed countries all over the world have passed laws, anti-monopoly laws, in order to try to ensure that people are not exploited, super exploited, because of the monopolies that exists. That is why I think, if the cable is only controlled by GT&T it will be *de facto*, consolidating a monopoly in our society. Therefore, this is so because as I said, the privatisation agreement... **[Interruption]**

Mr. Speaker: Allow the Hon. Member to speak please.

Mr. Ramotar: Mr. Speaker, we have had our own experiences...

Mr. Speaker: Hon members. I would like to have the opportunity for the Hon. Member to complete his speech in silence please.

Mr. Ramotar: We have had experience here with the same telephone monopoly we are talking about. We recall that before we had a second company dealing with cellular telephones we had to pay a huge amount of money for telephone calls. We also had to have a minimum charge, if we spoke on our cell phones for five seconds we had to pay for a minimum of one minute, and the charges were extremely high. Just by introducing a second company to provide that service within our society, immediately, the price of cell services was slashed by half; some 50%. Not only was it slashed by half, we have other benefits that our consumers are having, from the competition that exists within the sector at this point in time. Therefore, it is very clear that we want to ensure that our children's future will not be stymied by a monopoly. We want to ensure that every school has a computer lab, as we are doing right now. The Hon. Member Mr. Franklin is way out of touch. All the new schools we're building now in our country have science labs and are equipped with I.T. labs at this point in time. One of the reasons we're doing what we're doing, is to ensure that our children will have an opportunity to deal with the modern tools of our society and that is some of the things we are fighting for.

We want to ensure that our medical services, even in the remotest areas in our country can have access to this type of technology that is also making a big contribution in healthcare.

In security, we want to ensure that our police stations are also equipped with this technology, as we fight for a better and safer country, as we have been talking about. Therefore, it really beats me; I really cannot understand why the Opposition has been so vociferous, and so much against the Government spending on something that clearly has great benefits to our Country at this point in time.

Look at how our services are being modernised. Just look at our health. Today we are able to put stents in people's hearts, clear their passage for blood to flow. [Member: In their arteries] Thank you for the correction sir. We are doing all of these things at a time... look at where we have come from, when rats used to be eating the hands of children at a public hospital in Georgetown. If that is not a revolution I don't know what is in the health services.

Look at our schools. In many, many schools now our children are having the opportunity to work with this new technology. We are trying our best. The Hon. Member Mrs. Hastings made a statement here about how many students we have per teacher in the Upper Mazaruni. Well, I have come from a village not too far from there, the near interior, Karia Karia, and many times people come asking me to try to get teachers to go there, and that is the near interior. So we know it is a struggle. But what has not been appreciated is the efforts we are making to get the teachers there. And you should know that because you are within the Administration itself.

We are trying to even out all of these things within the society itself by introducing information technology, one of the main cutting-edge in our times. We are at the same time opening possibilities. You talk about job creation. You criticise us and tell us we should be producing more jobs yet you are opposing something that can create thousands of jobs in this society. It really beats me as to what type of rationale you are using in this type of opposition you are making.

Mr. Speaker, another area of modernisation that has been badly misrepresented in this House by the Opposition is the question of the Low-Carbon Development Strategy. I think, that we cannot only look at this from one point of view otherwise we will miss the big picture. In fact, that is the direction in which the world is going at this point in time. And I believe that we should be congratulated for the vision in trying to be ahead of the cause in this case; not lagging behind, but being at the head of a curve. I believe that there will come a time in our world... because I am convinced that the ecological problems are real problems, that these issues are real issues, and that there are global problems that mankind has to tackle and deal with. If there are real problems then I do not see that the world will continue in this way. That is why you had the Copenhagen Conference and so forth looking for a way out for what is recognised as the real problem in our society. We are trying to be ahead, not lagging behind, in this. That is why we are serious, and Government statements abound with our determination to bring in hydro-electricity to Guyana. That is why we are working towards

having co-generation in the society. That is why we are investigating wind technology and even biogas technology within our society.

These are areas that we have to explore. Because I believe - in the same way a few years ago, we were banned from shipping prawns and some kinds of fish to the United States because they claim there was overfishing there; or from time to time had timber products, forest products being put under sanctions; or some African countries because of some war were restricted from exporting diamonds. If countries don't adopt a policy of dealing with low carbon type of development in the production of energy resources that it is quite possible a time could come when countries could be sanctioned for not having these measures in place. Therefore, it is important that we continue to work in this direction and continue to build the future generation to be able to pick up the ball when we would have passed on and continue in the direction we have started.

Modernisation, we cannot only speak about new industries and new things. Because new things will take time and there is a lag, we can't wait. We do not have the luxury of time. Therefore it is important that we focus on modernising the traditional sectors that we have operating at present. In that regard, is precisely what is happening in the sugar industry! The problem being experienced in the sugar industry is a problem of transformation that is taking place to make this a modern society.

3.40 p.m.

I am surprised that some Members of the P.N.C. have taken up that position against many of the things that we are trying to do within the sugar industry. Because, if they look in their own manifestos which obviously they have not read since 2006, they would find there, that many of the things which we are doing, the P.N.C. has in their own manifesto. They talk about modernising the industry. They talk about value added, the same things that we are trying to do. But, obviously this is a classic case of opposition for opposition sake, no constructive opposition.

We have started the modernisation process with building a new factory at Skeldon. Yes, it has problems. Yes, some of the problems are not easy, but at least we have started and I have every confidence, that we will overcome these problems within our society. I am also convinced that we are going to continue the modernisation process, that we will outfit more sugar factories with co-generation capacities. Right now at Enmore, we are building in new

packaging plant with a capacity of some 80,000 tonnes a year. It should be finished before the end of this year, for us to; instead of selling bulk sugar and bag sugar in the Caribbean; we can take the Caribbean market and increase our price, above what we have lost in the European market.

All of these things we are doing. We have possibilities of using our molasses. Someone mentioned that on the opposite side also. We have possibilities of going into fuel-alcohol. Already you know it is the sugar industry that is the main basis for the rum industry within the Country.

I have no doubt that these temporary problems which GuySuCo is facing will be overcome and the sugar industry will continue to make a positive contribution to the Country's economic and social life.

I want to look at our stewardship in the 2009 economy, or how we manage the economy in 2009. I think that this time the Opposition was really struggling to find something to say to criticise the budget. Even my friend the Hon. Member Mr. Murray had to resort to some, what I will describe as petty arguments. He said, "You had a 2.3% growth, but you did not hit your target of 4%". That was one of the main points that he made in the debate here in this budget. I do not think that, that criticism could really be serious.

We do not live in a world that is isolated. We do not live in a vacuum. Our main trading partners, the United States, Europe and Japan, have been affected by a deep recession. Therefore, our growth rate must be seen in that context. Any serious economic or political analyst must say that our achievement has been laudable, to have achieved this in the type of environment that we are in.

This is how we have been managing our economy since 1992. As was mentioned in the Budget, this has been the fourth consecutive positive growth that we have had. I want to submit, that with the new rebasing to use as a measurement for the G.D.P., even if you go back to those years where we had negative growth or no growth, using the new methodology, the new things that are coming in to measure the G.D.P. you will see that our economy grew even in that point in time. Which of course shows the prudent management by the P.P.P./Civic Government of the economy in our Country. This is not only recognised by the P.P.P. and the P.P.P./Civic Government. This was mentioned by the Hon. Member Mr. Lumumba in his contribution. He pointed to what the USAID has been saying about our

performance only recently. Therefore I will not repeat what he said. But, I would like to turn to what I would say; every independent and unbiased person who looks at our performance has given us good marks.

Recently, the I.D.B. has put out a publication called Partners for Progress. At the very beginning they have some figures which paint a great picture of how far we have come. They showed from 1970 to 1978 our economy grew by 1.4% average per annum. From 1977 to 1990 we had a minus average every year of 2.8% negative growth. In 1982 Guyana began defaulting on its debts. In 1997 the public sector monthly minimum wage rose greatly from 63 US dollars per capita to 776 US dollars and now it is well over a thousand US dollars.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at what they have said in their write up you will see that our Country has gone a far way. I would like to read very briefly a few short paragraphs of what has been said by the I.D.B.

Mr. Speaker: Before you get to the paragraph, you need an extension of time.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Hon. Member be given 10 minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Ramotar: Thank you Mr. Speaker. They went on to talk about taxation and so forth. They said this:

“In 1990 debt service payments and interest amounted to 140% and 53% of our export earnings.”

That is where we have been coming from in 1990. It went on:

“The 1992 elections signalled a return to democracy. The People's Progressive Party won the majority vote after 28 years in Opposition, and Dr. Cheddi Jagan was elected President.”

One USAID assessment asserted that,

“The policies that the P.P.P./Civic Government had followed had resulted in the highest rate of economic growth in the hemisphere, sharply reduced inflation,

increased exports, contributing to greater foreign investments and allow for more product diversification within our society"

Mr. Speaker they went on to add:

“Over the last four years Guyana has experienced renewed growth”

We are talking about this last four years,

“The country experienced an alleviation of its debt burden compared, with previous years, introduced more far-reaching reforms and benefited from improvement in the terms of trade. There are tangible enhancements in the infrastructural institutional and social framework in the Country. These contribute to an improving business environment and the quality of life of all Guyanese"

These are independent people. It is not Mr. Ramotar saying so; this is coming from the I.D.B. This is what they have been saying in all of this.

What were the main policies that helped us to make this achievement in a world that was in tremendous problem from 2008 to now? I think there are too humane policies that we can turn to;

Firstly, it is the infrastructural development that we have been making in this country, the rebuilding of our roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals. They have had a very positive impact on our country's development. I would like to read again from the "independent source" of what they thought of our programme which they were part of in helping us to build. They said:

“The progression of infrastructure investment in the Road transport network has brought about social and financial benefits which although not always readily quantifiable, have clearly contributed to the economic advancements that are being realised in the country.

On the human resource side, discussions with principals in the field attest to the growth of young local engineers, who have benefited from knowledge transferred from the I.D.B. sector specialist and personnel from international engineering contractors, enabling them to act independently with great confidence. Senior engineers believe the present level of technical discourse and debate within the

Ministry of Public Works and Communication has much more professional debt. In fact the Ministry has now resumed its role as the focal reference point and oversight body for all road works indicated across the public sector.”

Mr. Speaker, they went on to add:

“From a position with very little or no capacity a decade or so ago, with a **caida** of knowledgeable engineers in the Ministry of Public Works and Communication now has adequate capacity. In addition, technological advancement has been made with the acquisition of a range of computers, engineering tools and equipment to support investment operations to generate income. It has imminent plans to formalise a design review service that will be available to the public sector agencies.”

That speaks volumes of how far are we have come. The point that they only made in passing, but of which I want to make frontally is that it had tremendous beneficial spin-off effects on our economic development within the society because of the multiplying effect that we have in economics.

Another programme that we have to look at is the social welfare programme. There is new thinking in this regard. During these days, particularly with the crisis that we have had people are seeing, when you compare what has happened in different countries, that the welfare sector is no longer just seen as a sector that gives out money to help people, but it is seen as very important for economic development, particularly when countries are in financial and economic trouble.

For instance, if you compare the stimulus package in the United States, and that of Brazil, you will see that both were larger than China. You will see that the U.S. and U.K. had large stimulus packages that were directed to help the big businesses, the banks. They are still in financial and economic trouble. The banks have not been lending and they have been taking this money to pay huge bonuses. But Brazil’s programme *Bolsa Família* which gives assistance to the poorest, helped and in Mexico and Trinidad helped tremendously to relieve the economic impact of the crisis in their economies. These things have helped economically because of the money they put directly to the poor who spent it back directly in the system, and with the multiplying effect it helped their economy.

Even now in our own country, you ask what we are doing. In our country we have spent billions in the social sector. I believe if the P.N.C. had done that when our economy was in

crisis in their time, they might have not been where they are today. They have had a declining spending on the social sector continuously. For instance, in 1984 they spent 12.7% of the budget on the social sector, 8.1% in 1989, and 4.4% in 1991, it has been declining. Whilst we have started from that 4.4% and today it is more than 20% of our expenditure.

For instance, more than 3.1 billion a year goes to our old age pensioners, and one billion goes to people for public assistance. Youth empowerment, \$121 million is spent in that regard. School uniforms, more than \$300 million we spend there and on legal aid, \$35 million to help poor people. We have also spent a lot of other money on school feeding programmes and so forth that definitely had to have had a powerful impact on our economy for us to realise the growth that we have in our economy today.

Even now in the latest edition of the world of work published by the I.L.O. we see that they are saying that it is very important in crisis to spend on social welfare. Our stimulus package went to the poor to help our people to develop.

Even now the U.K. is changing their position. In the election campaign Mr. Brown is talking about not cutting spending on social services. One man, the Secretary of Children in the United Kingdom, Mr. Ed Balls said they will not cut spending on social services. He was speaking a lot of sense when he made that statement.

I just want to quickly talk about the difference with the debt; because there has been a lot of criticism we have had about the debt services. What is the difference in the debt? We see that we have borrowed; our debt is now over US\$900 million. But we can show where every cent of the money we have borrowed is going, to build an infrastructure, to modernise our social and physical infrastructure. We had inherited US\$2.1 billion in debt and you could not show us anything that you had for that debt.

I would like to say that we have transformed this country as far as governance is concerned. We have been able to have accountability, transparency and consultation all over this Country. The problem with consultation is that my friends on the other side have a different view of consultations. Their view of consultation is that you must agree with them in everything that they say. Otherwise if you do not agree with what they say, it is not consultation.

I would like to just show you an example; we have been advertising in the press for bids for stationary, for cleaning supplies, dietary supplements and at the same time when they were in

power, they sold the telephone company without consulting anyone. They sold it for US\$16 million with its bank account that had \$16\$ million. In actual fact, it was a giveaway. Now they come here to defend ATN at this Parliament at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker, let me say in conclusion, the Budget must be seen as a tool of modernisation and another step in the direction of realising the vision of an advance and all-round development in our country. We must therefore all work hard to achieve the targets that we have set so that we can realise the dreams of our patriots who came before us and the vision which we have set ourselves today. I thank you for your attention. [Applause]

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Speaker given your penchant for fairness and equality, I trust that you will be as gracious with me in my time as you were with the Hon. Member. I rise today on behalf of the Alliance For Change and on behalf of us on this side of the House to say that I am filled with pride. I have become convinced over the last week, but having listened to the Hon. Member Mr. Ramotar I am more than ever convinced that in an equal and ideal situation, pound for pound the Opposition benches have won this debate hands down. If this debate were to be fought, not one who has more members, but for points awarded on good points made, we would have won since last week Wednesday. In this vein therefore, I wish to congratulate all of us here in the Opposition for a job well done. I am particularly pleased with my colleagues from the Alliance For Change, and if I may with his leave extend that gratitude to Mr. Franklyn as well.

The debates have been quite interesting. It is said that all politics is local, and I would like to before going on, wish to congratulate the Hon. Member from the People's National Congress Reform and the new joining member of the People's Progressive party Civic. I trust that they will listen to the good wishes and sentiments expressed to them and my own comment to them is, at all time to thy known self be true, this place can destroy you unless you know what you are doing.

I join in also congratulating Hon. Member Dr Singh on presenting his fourth Budget in succession for the people and state of Guyana. I will deal with issues of it in detail later on. To the entire Members of Parliament, particularly those who come from the geographic locations, it is a pity that Hon. Member Teixeira does not, but I believe that from them we received the best debates. I single out my colleagues from Linden and Region 1, the Hon. Member Mr. Whittaker who is always on the cutting edge to use Mr. Ramotar's words. I

wish to single out in this regard is well, the Hon. Dr Mahadeo who I think gave a speech which I will refer to later on that really impressed me because of his honesty and sincerity.

There were some low moments during this debate. I believe some words were exchanged, and I hope that some of us are big enough to apologise for some statements which I believe ought not to have been made, particularly if I may zero in a bit, between female Members of Parliament, it is uncalled for. We had the type of behaviour not unbecoming of Members of Parliament and we were to some regards and particularly when you were away, behaving in a quite lawless manner and we wish to apologise. To that extent therefore, if in any way the Alliance For Change contributed to any of the acts or omissions within this House which may have brought it into some level of disrepute, I as its leader wish to apologise to you and to the people of Guyana.

In addressing this Budget of 2010, I stated last year using the words of the Morgan Heritage song, that for tens of thousands of persons, “there was nothing to smile about”. Indeed for them the situation remains just the same. Today, this year, we have a new cry, not coming from the “Gully side” or from the “Gaza”, but from the womb. That cry is “Mama I don’t want to be born”. The social commentary of Tenescia De Freitas tells of a baby not wanting to be born into the stifling economic and social conditions that this republic offers on its 40th birth anniversary.

This year, as I said there was a cacophony of continuous noise and confusion which almost ended in a brawl. Unfortunately there were some low moments which tended to overshadow the brighter spots of this debate. I hope that they are never repeated. The predicament that we face in this Assembly is not unique to Guyana. Only yesterday I read an article coming out of the United States, where they are beginning to question the very nature of their system of governance, whether or not their Congress of representatives is serving the people and the interest of America. In fact some senators and congressmen and women in the U.S. are choosing instead to retire and resign rather than face re-election. They feel that they have become too far removed from the way the founding fathers intended for them to behave.

Tomorrow for us marks 40 years of Guyana being a Republic. It is pellucid to me that, this milestone places us at a juncture. A Republic by definition is a state in which power is held by the people and their elected representatives. If we are to be true to ourselves, we will have to concede and admit that in Guyana we have not realise that ideal state that was vision which was proclaimed and bequeathed to us by the founding fathers of this Nation.

We are in my view so far adrift today that we are unsure as to the type of system of governance we should still be establishing in Guyana. Rather than embrace an ideal of nationalism, we have preferred instead to each execute our individual roles according to our individual interpretations, but have done very little, I posit or nothing collectively to build an indivisible secular, democratic and sovereign Republic of Guyana after 40 years of being a Republic.

Ultimately in my opinion the people have suffered and fled by the thousands to greener pastures. We have meandered for 40 years and now find ourselves at this juncture; a juncture that beacons a new opportunity for us to act in accordance with the constitution and establish, and I quote the Constitution itself:

“to forge a system of governance that promotes concerted efforts and broad-based participation in national decision making in order to develop a viable economy and a harmonious community based on democratic values, social justice, fundamental human rights, and the rule of Law, and one which celebrates our cultural and racial diversity and strengthens our unity by eliminating any and every form of discrimination”

I say therefore, let us this day choose for ourselves weather the direction goes, the Republic of Guyana, it's people and it's elected representatives. For us in the Alliance For Change we choose to take the turn at the intersection and recommence that journey that was the vision of the founding fathers of this Republic. We invite all members of this House to do so with us, to share this journey with us.

I submit that since the monarchy was replaced in 1970, we should have gone further to changer the manner in which important decisions were made for the people in this Assembly. Not having done so, we have in a sense created a paradox of gargantuan proportions. We put away the regalia in 1970, but we failed to change the systems that organize us and the structures under which we function, thus not completing the full transition that we were meant to undergo. Guyana's republic therefore has different features than Barbados' or Jamaica's. We have ethnic, racial, cultural and religious differences and strands that have not only to be reinforced but also braided together to produce our unique People's Republic.

4.10 p.m.

We cannot therefore maintain this republic in this manner if we continue to practice our combative, competitive and confrontational type of Governance. It is time to change and we

believe that it is time for a new Republic. *[Member: Change?]* Yes change, it is inevitable.

As predictably and inevitably as ever, we parade our troops every year and our colours in what is becoming, in my view, an annual pantomime – they advance and we attack. We do this because we believe that this is the way that other Parliaments and Assemblies do it because we believe that there is no other way that this exercise can be done. We behave this way because we were trained to behave this way. Now at forty years old after absolute political independence was gained from monarchical rule, I believe that we have the ability to discern for ourselves that this way is not promoting our harmonious development, but rather exacerbating the divisions not only between us here in this Assembly, but within and amongst the people who we purport to represent. We are the example that they follow. Should we not then admit publicly what we have already admitted to ourselves privately after searching our minds and consciousness that this way of fighting, denigrating and insulting each other cannot be the right way?

There has to be something fundamentally wrong with the way we approach management and decision making processes. This flaw is accentuated when we come to discuss and debate these estimates and financial projections for the year. It is nonsense that we sit here without prior consultations and then go through the annual pantomime of attacking and defending what is meant to be in the people's best interest. This way best suits a monarch who, after hearing the debate between her loyal Government and her loyal Opposition, makes a decision as to what is best for the State. With the greatest of respect to you, Mr. Speaker, you do not possess either those monarchical or jurisdictional powers to decide what is best. You only assist in preserving order. And so, despite the jaundiced minds and memories of most who would not recognise or remember a word of praise even when it is given, has come from this side of the House.

I will, as I did last year, recognise a Minister who I believe has earned my respect and that respect is growing. Two years ago I remember that I recognised the Hon. Minister Mrs. Manickchand-Murli. Last year I recognised the duo of the doctors of the Ministry of Health because despite what had been said and of course revelations about computers had not yet come around during the debate, I recognised that even in so far, our health care system could be doing far better, there were still advances that had been made and I did do so. This year, in keeping with that tradition, my Minister who is going to cause some shock is the Minister of

Home Affairs. It is strange because last year could be considered for the Disciplined Forces, what the Royals would refer to as an *annus horribilis* – a most horrible year. Yet, in working with the Minister of Home Affairs, I recognise that he is a man who accepts that mistakes have been made and who, from my view, is consistent in trying to correct them. I believe that I should let him know that. We may not always see eye to eye, though I would like to find out what hair products he is using because I notice a black rim and I may wish to share some of it. We share certain things in common and I wish to say that despite all that we may have learnt or read on the atrocities committed in the name of the Joint Services last year, it is still important to recognise people who are prepared to make things better and I so do now.

My friend, the Hon. Minister of Finance, carries the Honourific of Honourable and I believe that he is deserving of this Honourific. I believe therefore, that he will accept my comments, not as slings and arrows, but as fair comments and criticisms which are meant to inspire him to be different. And also to rise to the challenge from today onwards by breaking the old, archaic, useless and decaying mould and by simply reaching out to some Members of the Opposition before the next Budget is laid and by simply sharing the whole or extracts thereof with us. Close your eyes my Hon. brother and imagine how meaningful a debate would be in this House, if only you dared to be different. I say this to you not in anger or indignation, but in want of brotherhood of friendship and support. If this Budget fails, we all fail. I have stated in the past that there is nothing preventing a Minister from reaching consensus, not through debate, but through discussion in advance.

In the historical context of all politics, we have been designed and programmed to propose and to oppose. We do not have to accept everything that was given to us because this is the way it was done before 1966. There are other ways and other worlds waiting to be explored and conquered if only we dared to brave and different.

Today therefore, as I said, I will break with that tradition and speak to this Budget not in opposition to it per say, but rather to make suggestions for strengthening and hope that by doing so, I would have indeterminably altered the status quo and contributed to a demonstration of what is possible. My suggestions and those made by my colleagues of the Opposition are unlikely to be taken on board at all, but I have no doubts that in their quieter moments, those on that side must reminisce and agree that some very valuable and good points were made on this side.

The Opposition has always been accused of not recognising one iota of progress and development ushered in by this Administration so much so that the Hon. Member, Mr. Donald Ramotar, was at pains to point out about four achievements, sad to say. Though difficult to see, there are signs of progress and we cannot gainsay that. Undoubtedly however, every Ministry and every department has done some things well and if we are to be fair and honest, we need to recognise that. In terms of why you are not recognised, in my view, it is what I would call an occupational hazard of being in the public service and as Shakespeare said: “The good that men do...” What happens to it? “...is often interred with them.” I think we should be less stressed about what we hear and what good is said about us and concentrate more on what it is we are supposed to be doing for the people.

My formula for getting those changes is quite simple. If we were to have Members standing as Dr. Vishwa Mahadeo did and say to us that in Berbice where he is, things are not perfect, but that they are working on them, that, in and of itself is such a disarming argument that it would have rendered any hostile barbs from this side, blunt. I admired Dr. Mahadeo’s form of debate because we acknowledged that there were many things that were to be done, there were things that were not done correctly and had to be corrected. That is the way it should be done and if it were done that way and we see a display of humility on the other side, I would say that correspondingly, they would get something like that in return. It is so simple.

When it was that my friend representing Region 10, I do not know if you were here, Mr. Speaker, a bottle was produced showing the sample of water to be consumed by the people of Region 10. The reply was a very arrogant one. What we required from him was a statement that says:

“If that is the water that you had to give to your son at the hospital, Hon. Member, we apologise. We are going to ensure that your son, you or anyone who goes to the Linden Hospital never has to drink filth like this. We may not be perfect, but we are working on it.”

Instead, we were subject to a tirade. Some of us were accused of being unpatriotic. I wish to remind you that we all took the Oath in this House to serve the people of Guyana and we do so, albeit in different ways.

The book of Proverbs tells us that: “Where there is no vision, a nation perishes.” Regrettably, Hon. Minister of Finance in your presentation we do not see that coherent, holistic and

comprehensive vision followed by a strategy that weaves the various strands together so that each individual worker will know what is expected of him/her. Also, students from the University of Guyana will know that - once they graduate - know where they are going to be in terms of the national development of Guyana. When the Hon. Member, Mr. Norman Whittaker, spoke he gave a figure of 9,672 students who were registered in Region 1. Fantastic! But my mind quickly jumped to the questions – how many of them are going to graduate, Hon. Member Whittaker, how many of them are going to find jobs and not just find jobs, but find jobs in places where they want to work and how many of them are going to remain in Region 1? Let us break that down some more - how many of them plan on remaining to serve their country of Guyana? That is what we are interested in. Not how many you now have in hand, but how many are you going to deliver to this country in the final analysis. It is more than just educating our sons and daughters. It ought to be giving them training to be part of a grand nationalistic scheme of things to take their relative and respective places at the giant wheel that turns the machinery of building this nation.

Admittedly, the adumbration of this vision is not the responsibility of the Hon. Member and Minister of Finance and I have to recognise that. His job and I think the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramotar, pointed out is to present a Budget that shows income and expenditure of the year. The vision, in my opinion, has to come from higher up and perhaps, if more time was spent in Guyana, it would be discernable, understood and supported by all. But rather, on a daily basis, we are bounced between various policies ostensibly promoting various things. We are fighting *El Nino*, promoting LCDS, erecting a sugar factory at Skeldon, destroying drug houses in poor people's communities, building hydropower plants, going to Iran, getting aid from China, rejecting aid from the United Kingdom, selling rice to Venezuela, having United States Agency for International Development funding, speaking to our Brazilian counterparts and accepting a gift of a bridge. The point I wish to make is that we are moving from pillar to post and it is difficult to discern what the underpinning philosophy of this Government is in taking this country forward. We are moving from pillar to post and everything should be informed by that vision.

In the moments left, I wish to turn to a few areas of governance and security. I start with enhanced framework for cooperation. I notice that Hon. Member, Ms. Gail Teixeira, has bolted because I believe that this is her purview and remit. I believe that one of the greatest disappointments of the 9th Parliament has been the failure of this Government to implement the enhanced framework for cooperation. His Excellency the President addressed us at the

beginning of this session and spoke laudably about his intentions to improve relations and identify a number of issues that we can all work together on. Some of us – the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Everall Franklin representing G.A.P/R.O.A.R., and I found ourselves at the Office of the President only to find that that was the first and last meeting held in November 2006 to discuss this issue. Here lies a fantastic opportunity to change course and move in a new direction. As I said, it is the greatest disappointment of this Government, in my view, in terms of governance.

I cannot move on without saying something about the Freedom of Information Legislation. Every day we are reminded as to why this Legislation is imperative for the democracy in Guyana, that is, if it is to succeed. Not because the current legislation is laid in my name that I raise this matter, it is a matter as important as bread and butter. This legislation which was a promise made by this Government in 2006 and 2001 in their manifestos, should be implemented.

I follow the Freedom of Information Legislation with the Broadcast Legislation. The Hon. Prime Minister spoke and I hope not glibly, about bringing this Legislation soon. But this is the 4th year of soon. When is soon going to be soon? Nowhere is this issue of Freedom of Information and Broadcast Legislation more acute than in Region 10. The people there are fed a diet of propaganda from only one television station and are not allowed to hear or see anything else. That in my view is unconscionable and is an atrocity in itself.

The Ombudsman of whom the Hon. Deputy Speaker spoke of earlier, in a society such as ours, is supposed to be that man who stand as the unblemished mediator between the sides, especially where there is a divided society to protect the small person from the large and oppressive State. Even if the State is not oppressive, the Ombudsman is supposed to stand to give the confidence to the small person that they are going to be protected from the State. Even if the State showed signs of becoming oppressive or discriminatory, there would be a person symbolised in the Office of the Ombudsman who would give that protection. I believe that we are now entering the 10th year when for some inexplicable reason, this Government has failed and I will go on to say, refused to appoint an Ombudsman for the people of Guyana to protect them and that is a shame.

I now come to a pet subject of mine and that is the giving of national awards. No self respecting country can afford to carry on its affairs on a daily basis if it does not have a system of meritocracy where it recognises the value of its citizens be it for bravery, whether

you are a sugar worker, taxi driver or whether a person has done well in the fields of sciences or literature. How can a country sustain itself if after seven years we have not had an investiture ceremony? I urge the Hon. Member and the Minister of Finance to raise these matters. These are matters that do not require money, but these are matters that if only things were put in place, would reinforce the kind of Republic that our founding fathers – and notice that I do not say father – intended for us. We are meant to recognise our peers, we are meant to recognise that some of us have done well. It cannot be for seven years that no one in this country is befitting or deserving of an award. I know that awards were given of which we encouraged to cricketer, Mr. Shivnarine Chanderpaul, and the President of the Caribbean Development Bank (C.D.B.), but these are *ad hoc* instances. There must be a return to the annual national awards to the people of Guyana. I do not care who these people are and what they look like. [Mr. Nokta: Every year it is the same thing] Even you, Sir, I would like to nominate for an Order of Excellence (O.E.) if you do not mind. You have served and your name carries throughout the length and breadth of this country. Why can you not be recognised? These are the kind of persons who should be recognised. You should not be sitting in the backseat grumbling. We need to bring you forward.

I move to the Rights and Procurement Commission. After 2001, we are left with a situation where the Rights and Procurement Commissions are left on paper only. This is another instance where we do not need money. All we need is a political will and a patriotic spirit that says for my country I am going to do this. It is time to establish these Commissions.

I come to a vexed issue which touches and concerns us over here inasmuch as it does the Members over there. How can a country for four years have an acting Chancellor and Chief Justice? There are the things that undermine the very efficacy of our judiciary because workers in the judicial system are the judges. They look on and they believe that if he is acting, he has no tenure of office and therefore he cannot function. I implore the Leader of the Opposition who is present today and His Excellency the President to find a way to reach a compromise where some concessions are going to have to be made on both sides. However, I believe that the time has come for us to say that we have a substantive Chief Justice of Guyana and a substantive Chancellor. No country can sustain itself with pride if it has only acting appointments.

I turn now to our own situation. We believe that the time has come to lift the profile and status of this Assembly and of the Parliamentarians who preside in it. If we do not have

respect for ourselves and each other, how then can we expect the public out there to show us any respect? I read yesterday in the newspapers where a letter writer referred to us as “lawless” because of an incident that took place, again, in your absence, last week. That is the view and if one were to wander within 15 feet of this August Assembly, one would hear any person, be it the plantain chip vendor or the hire car drivers at the park say that they have lost confidence collectively in all of us. It is time to restore it. I know that you, Mr. Speaker, have fought sometimes a lonely battle to restore that light. How can we function with allowances of \$250 per month for our entertainment, \$100 for duty and \$20 for telephone service? Time has come for us to be given due recognition. If we want to demand respect, we have to be respected ourselves. We hope that every parliamentary party will have an office. I suggested the building next door which is abandoned. The Leader of the Opposition should have an office. Every party in this Assembly should be housed so that any member of the public – whether they belong to a party or not – could be able to interface with Members of this Assembly and I know, that you, Mr. Speaker, may have your own Chamber. These are little things that may be done and I am again suggesting the building that housed the Statistical Bureau as a fit and proper building which is within arm’s length of this building and which can, I believe, be reconfigured to provide that office space for us. We should have internet access. We should have as in the case of Suriname, every Member of Parliament having their own laptop provided for them. That laptop is left on the desk when you leave, but you have access and tools to do your work. Even in this debate there is no facility nearby here. One has to go downstairs for things like printing and preparing documents. There should be a little Secretariat set up nearby.

I wish, Mr. Clement Rohee notwithstanding what I said to make a statement about the security forces. To say that lawlessness permeates every force in this country is an understatement. The Disciplined Forces must enforce the laws and protect the people of Guyana and not become the enemy of Guyanese. Some of the ranks roaming the streets are becoming monstrous. I have encountered two of them and had to give one of them “my tongue” recently. They are preying on the helpless and defenceless poor people. I am referring now to the Guyana Defence Force (G.D.F.). I strongly posit that as we go through this period of transformation that we do not ensure that our force is weakened to the point that it cannot defend our territorial integrity of this country. The Alliance For Change stands in absolute support of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Government in whatever action they wish to take to defend the birthright of this country and its borders.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member having now glanced at my watch, I noticed that I have exercised that generosity with regards to time that you mentioned. My notes tell me that apart from the Hon. Member, Mr. Donald Ramotar, a Member from the AFC is to be allowed forty minutes. I do not know if you are that Member who is going to take those forty minutes, but if you are, you have 10 minutes more. Can I have a Motion for those 10 minutes?

Mrs. Holder: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given 10 minutes more, I am inclined to ask for more, but I know it would not be granted.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Trotman: Thank you Mr. Speaker for your generosity. A few short words on the environment and natural issues - this green land of Guyana is blessed with lush tropical forest, low population density, large tracks of unoccupied land and rich natural resources. In this 21st Century, environmental issues are major challenges that face many nations and Guyana is no exception. Human activity, predictably, impacts forested areas and natural resource exploitation such as logging and mining which contributes to forest degradation. The response by our Government to such challenges should not be to encourage a confrontation between miners and loggers, but educating all of the need to support efforts of biodiversity conservation and by maintaining economical integrity and initiative measures to reduce the loss or negative impact on the environmental services provided by the forest. To this extent therefore, we believe that the Government should negotiate, particularly with the miners, following the manifestation of strength which was exhibited a few weeks ago in the town of Bartica. And rather than bring us in conflict and confrontation with each other to resolve it so that we not only preserve our environment, but we also have sustainable development at the same time. It is quite possible we believe.

I would like to offer the Minister of Finance some points and suggestions and I know you will not take them on board now, but you will consider them in your quieter moments:-

1. We ask that you help to restore the dignity of the trade unions in Guyana by immediately replacing the Critchlow Labour College's subvention.
2. That you urge your colleague, the Hon. Member, Mr. Manzoor Nadir, to intervene to stop the "eye pass" taking place at Aroaima.

3. We ask that a policy be adopted which gives every citizen of Guyana, over the age of eighteen years, a plot of land for housing or agriculture, as per their choice. I believe another party, the P.N.C.R.-1G., also has a similar policy.
4. In terms of the sugar industry, I have been studying what is happening in Mauritius and I urge that we consider giving the sugar workers the land to toil themselves and buy the cane back from them. The time has come to end servedom and indeed usher in a new era of partnership between the industry and those who provide the cane for the sugar.
5. We ask for better farm to market roads and better water management schemes to assist our farmers. Only today I received a call from some Mahaica farmers who said that they were being discriminated against in terms of water management.
6. We ask that we pursue renewable energy, eco-tourism, agro-industrial processing and Information and Communications Technology (I.C.T.) as the new drivers of our production activities. In this regard, we suggest that legislations be introduced to ensure that by 2013, 10% all of our fuels is comprised of ethanol.
7. We ask that the bio-diesel industry be restarted and that coconuts and their production be our main focus.
8. We encourage the completion of the Lethem to Linden Road and we ask that the people of those contiguous regions be prepared for what is to come.
9. We encourage the building of the hydro boat at Amaila Fall, also at Tiger Hill in Region 10. We believe that the Tiger Hill project could sustain a smelter in that region.
10. We also canvassed some views on facebook and some of my friends said to tell the Minister of Finance to review the policy regarding remigrants, to lower the duty on motor cars, but raise the age limit of cars coming in.
11. They ask that you examine the root causes of crime by fixing the social issues affecting youth development.

These are some of the recommendations which have come from people other than me.

While we fool around, I would say that there is a cancer, an evil, eating away at the body politics of our society from below and within. It comes in many forms. It is the drought conditions that are crippling our farmers nationwide. It is the abnormal high incidence of sexual molestation of young girls and women and the abomination of violence and abuse, often times lead to murder.

This cancer can also be found in the “Gaza and Gully side” phenomenon that is dividing our children not only along ethnic and religious lines, but rather on a lyrical basis and leading them to waves of unprecedented violence against each other, their teachers in and outside of the schools. All these may not be the fault of the Government and it is not the responsibility of the Government, but I wish to say that fighting it can no longer be the responsibility of one. There is too much at stake.

I would like to say a word on inclusive governance. We in the A.F.C. believe that we should be inclusive and participatory in the manner of our governance. We seek to be in partnership with like-minded groups and individuals, both from within the body politics and civil society, to fashion a new Republic. This cannot be done only by a few false elites who tinker with the problem, but must out of necessity and commonsense if we are to ensure social cohesion, involve all of the people and all of the representatives.

4.40 p.m.

In my view it cannot be Indians for Indians, Africans for Africans, Amerindians for Amerindians and Portuguese for Portuguese or Mixed for Mixed. It has to be rather Africans for Africans and Indians and for Portuguese and for Chinese and for the Mixed and all others. It is only when we stop living for ourselves and for the sake of others that we will truly experience the re-birthing of this Nation.

Even now as I utter these words, I am becoming cognisance of the effect of what I am saying and better understanding in even my even my role as a Guyanese and a leader in this society. We all have to make this change. It is imperative.

In conclusion, I wish to say that my colleagues on both sides of the House have extolled the virtues of their individual positions and I have no doubt that all of the statements made here have been well meaning. Not those made on Friday night about the A.F.C. though. Recently, the discussion on greater majority of Budget debates was raised outside of this House. The former Member who raised that discussion ought to remember that when the Government was in Opposition, they raised something quite similar and their advances were rebuffed. Therefore, I urge that we find the courage to find consensus to ensure that the Budget is nationally owned and implemented or we will find that it remains a closely guarded preserve of the Government and thereby in and of itself that will poison the atmosphere that is necessary to ensure its success and national development which is intended to follow.

I expect that this Budget will be passed by the majority of Members of this House without any amendments and that is the case. However, that notwithstanding and though unfortunate, I look forward to a new dispensation of cordiality and engagement both within this Chamber and outside of it. I believe that within the time frame of this 9th Parliament of Guyana, it is not too late for us to change directions. I therefore, as a mark of our commitment, pledge on behalf of the Executives and Members of the A.F.C. that we will rededicate our energies towards improving the relations between each other and restoring the proper relationship with the people which we are expected to have. From this day onwards we expect the honour and respect of this National Assembly to be restored and for us as Members to reflect and personify the dignity that is expected as we get about the peoples' business. Let us this day chose to follow the path and embrace the vision of our founding fathers.

Finally, I wish to repeat some of the words of the prayers we use every day in this Chambers, with the sincere hope that it will have a different meaning and application henceforth:

“Grant us oh God the vision to lead that all people of this fair land may enter into that state of brotherhood and unity where the mind is lead forward by thee into ever widening thought and action.”

As Joshua asked of the people of Israel, I now ask rhetorically. Chose you well this day whether you will continue on the old road or if you are committed or brave enough to choose the new road. We are at that forty mile juncture. There is a decision that has to be made now. Some of us have already made that decision and we cannot demand or coerce others to do so. I say therefore, long live the Republic of Guyana. Long live the people of Guyana and may God Bless us all. Thank you. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Member. Before calling the suspension, I would just like to inform you, Hon. Member, that the matters you referred to in relation to the National Assembly, except the pay, over which we have no control - the allowances - are already and have been long engaging the attention of our office. And you will move out of the realm of our office into the wider world very shortly. Hon. Members it is now time to take the suspension for the usual period. I would like to remind Members that we have a meeting of the business of Committee immediately after we suspend.

Assembly suspended accordingly at 4.45 p.m.

Assembly resumed accordingly at 5.47 p.m.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Speaker may I crave your indulgence before...

Mr. Speaker: Sorry, but Mr. Trotman wanted to say a few words.

Mr. Trotman: ...the Hon. Member speaks. During my presentation I intimated that in your absence there had been an uprising and it has ceased, well not that it ceased, but this happened in your absence. On reflection, it occurred to me that I may have imputed quite unwittingly and inadvertently that whilst the Deputy Speaker presided over the House she was unable to keep the order. I wish to state publicly that I had no intention of impugning her Chairmanship of these proceedings. I believe that she does a fine job and my respect and standing for her and her standing in my eyes, remain intact. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: The “uprising” to use your words was not caused by the Hon. Deputy Speaker and you made that clear to me in Chambers. She was not responsible for it. She responded in a very dignified and honourable manner and I said that on the first the day that I came out.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I think one of the Bob Marley’s CD is entitled “Uprising.” Sometimes uprising could have a tone that brings light sometimes to some rather dull sessions of the National Assembly.

I rise to speak with some sense of disappointment also with respect to the level of the debates that took place in the National Assembly. I say so because many years ago myself and the Hon. Member, Mr. Donald Ramotar, would sit in that gallery in the 70’s and 80’s and listen to many interesting debates in this House that were of a very high quality. When compared with today’s debates, I believe on some occasions, much is left to be desired.

I believe that the political debate on a number of issues that we have in the wider society would mirror the level of debate we would have in the National Assembly because it is basically the same players. The same players who debate in the wider society are represented here and in a sense, one would mirror the other. As the great German philosopher, Hegel, said in his Epic work *Anti-Dühring*: “Man is a product of circumstances and to change the man, you need to change the circumstances.” That is precisely what we are seeking to do. To change the circumstances under which Guyanese live and work.

One of the instances that I can immediately refer to was when the famous Reverend Miles Munroe came to Guyana to introduce a different and higher level of political debate -a

quantity of discussions within the society that would go beyond its sterile political issues and beyond the routine of political issues which could bring some type of spiritual discussion. What was the response? The response was a statement issued by the Opposition P.N.C.R.-1G. which stated that they would not be in any way a part of this activity because they saw it as another attempt to divert the attention of the people of Guyana. They went on to say, and I am quoting here from an article in the Kaieteur News written by Mr. Gary Eleazer: "The party will lend no credence to what it calls 'Political Propaganda' and will not participate in the political exercise." It went on further to say: "...they will not be a passive bystander and give legitimacy to the imaginations of the political agenda of the P.P.P./C."

The question is: How? I put this to the Hon. Member, Mr. Raphael Trotman, as well. How are we going to arrive at that higher plane that you spoke about? How are we going to arrive at that level of political discourse in our country when a distinguished individual such as Rev. Miles Munroe comes to Guyana? This is the kind of rebut he gets from one of the political parties in this country that is supposed to be making a contribution to insure that the people live in peace and harmony.

We were regal in respect to the speech given by my Hon. colleague Minister, Dr. Ashni Singh. I would like to take this opportunity also to join my colleagues in congratulating him for such an impressive report. Scorn was cast was on the theme for the year's Budget. I think it is important for us to cast our minds back. When we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Guyana achieving Republican status, it was a time for reflection. We need to reflect on where we are today and how we come to be where we are today.

In 1980, the P.N.C. in those days had a pawn shop for labeling and designating every year, a year of something. In 1980, they designated that year the year of "Effort", in 1985 the year of "Youthfulness", in the year 1987 it was designated the year of "Purposeful Economic Adjustment", in 1986 it was designated the year of "Standing up for Guyana", in 1988 that year was designated year of "Staying Resolutely on Course" and then in 1990, that year was designated "The year of Intensified Effort and Greater Self Reliance". Given all this sloganeering, where have we gotten as a nation? The answer is obviously as the Hon. Opposition Leader said: "Nowhere".

The Hon. Member, Mr. Lance Carberry, said that the P.P.P./C. missed the opportunity of transformation through industrialisation of Guyana. I believe this is an attempt to misrepresent history. Why do I say so? This is a fact that is unassailable since it was the

P.P.P./C. Government that started the process of industrialisation between the years 1957-1964. That process was interrupted as a result of external intervention and local collusion of the C.I.A., the local Trade Union Movement and the People's National Congress among others to remove us from office. That is an historical fact that we ought not to forget.

The question was asked about vision. In speaking soon after the Budget was presented, the P.N.C.R.-1G. issued a statement which said that the Budget is long on words, short on vision and substance. That the allocations to the various sectors have little relevance to taking the large and increasing number of Guyanese out of poverty and there was a failure to engage in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Thank you for the kudos Mr. Trotman, but I want to recall that there used to be a man in this House by the name of Mr. L.F. S. Burnham. Mr. Robert Corbin, I do not recall if you were in the House at the time. Mr. Burnham used to give plaudits and kudos quite generously to P.P.P./C. M.P.s. He tried to swing their heads and make them feel as though they are the star and eventually, he engaged in the process of head hunting to win them over. He did succeed with some. I am just saying that Mr. Trotman for his part said that the Budget is a disappointment. It has nothing new to offer the people and was the usual, note these words: "cocktail of poisonous ingredients". However in the same breath, while he said that it was a cocktail of poisonous ingredients as though an in-depth study had already been made of the Budget, he goes off and says: "We will continue to study the Budget".

Mr. Winston Murray for his part, soon after the Budget was presented, in the corridor made the statement to the effect that: "The Budget was lacking in substance and is doing nothing to ease poverty and so forth." Let me say that a Budget is not a document for inspiration. I believe that if anyone wishes to have inspiration on the other side of the House, they should probably go to the church to get some divine inspiration. Or I would respectfully recommend that they listen to Ms. Mahalia Jackson and they will get quite a lot of inspiration there.

If we want to talk about vision, I am tempted to recommend that they: "Go find it on the mountains" and in this case I mean Roraima. As recent as 27th January this year, His Excellency the President in delivering his address to the Guyana Defence Force Officers Conference, in terms of vision, he told them: "I want to tell you where we are going to take the country in the next ten years", and I am not going to regal the House as to the details. One of the six pillars for the future direction of the country in the next ten years was first and

foremost hydropower. Hydropower electricity which the President himself said we will be embarking on this year.

The second is the question of telecommunication and transforming the telecommunication sector. That is why when I heard the Hon. Member, Mr. Aubrey Norton, said that the distribution of 20,000 computers is linked to the establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency and that investment in fibre optics cable from Brazil is a waste of money and unnecessary expenditure, I asked myself: "What type of dotishness is this?" This reminds me of a kind of quaint and primitive philosophical thinking that emerged in the bowels of the P.N.C. in the 1970's when we were told: "Dig a pond at the back of your yard and mine fish." We were also told that we should participate in knowledge sharing institutes which in fact was nothing else but an opportunity for corruption. I want to suggest that if we, as was pointed out, do not embark on transforming the telecommunication sector will be left behind.

The other direction that was pointed out was the question of linking Guyana or enhancing the linkage between Guyana and the northern states of Brazil. We are sitting, geographically speaking, next to the fourth most powerful economy in the world and we have to take advantage of that.

The other direction that was referred to was the sale of forest carbon and the resumption of oil and gas exploration this year. Then we also have as another directive for the future - the question of food production.

And finally, the fourth pillar - eco-tourism and our environmental strategy. If we are talking vision, for those of you who would like to understand the vision of the Government for over the next ten years, I would recommend that they secure a copy of the President's speech.

I recalled the last year Budget debate when the Hon. Member, Mr. Winston Murray, called upon the Government to set up a group of experts who can independently analyse where we are and where we are likely to go and to propose measures for dealing with what is likely to be a more difficult situation. I do not recall further recommendation about this setting up of the group of experts because we have proven, by a tint of example, that we can take this country not only forward, but out of any quagmire. Especially having regard for what was said in the Budget about the measures that was taken by the Government in 2009 to ensure that survivability is a hallmark of this Government performance throughout the years.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Murray, spoke about lack of consultation with opinion makers. I ask myself who these opinion makers are. Is it the cabal of the unholy alliance opposed to the Government? They like to give the impression of being independent when in point of fact independent for them means ability to attack the Government. That is how they establish their independence in thinking. You establish your independence of thinking by attacking the Government. And then you can stand on a pedestal and declare yourself independent. Are these the independent leaders? I want to submit that we are not going to be naive or be distracted by this. We are not prepared to go through, to use the Hon. Member, Mrs. Sheila Holder's word as charade with a photograph opportunity. Meeting with persons who, day in and day out, have shown their hostility to this Government, have not made any constructive recommendations or proposals whatsoever for 365 days. Yet you are coming to tell us now that we must sit with this nest of vipers and consult with them.

We recognise that there are difficult times ahead and we say that the storm is not yet over. We note the Minister himself when he said:

“Even so I would admonish that it be less of an occasion for celebration and more of a reason for vigilance on our part. For while the evidence of progress is plenty, the risk of reversal is never distant and the remainder of the work is certainly not complete”.

These are very important words for us to recall and not overlook. What we are sure about is that the ship, MV Guyana, is in safe hands. We are confident about that. We say that we will stay the course, but we know that we must be flexible and imaginative and at the same time, pragmatic enough to navigate this course and to dock when necessary at any port when the situation demands.

We never said that prosperity is around the corner. When the Hon. Member, Mr. Murray, said that prosperity is nowhere around the corner, he is whistling in the wind. Not only did we never say that prosperity is around the corner, but anyone who becomes prosperous overnight and who have done so neither by winning a lotto ticket nor by inheritance is a highly suspect person. We were never romanticist who held the erroneous view that the revolution is around the corner. There were some who held that view. However, the P.P.P./C. never held the view as a romanticist group of people that a revolution is around the corner.

6.13 p.m.

Prosperity is something that has to be earned. Everyone including you who benefit from the fruits of prosperity which grow in this country must make your contribution. That is what we are about on this side of the House - hard work. I agree with the Prime Minister when he said that growth and development come in stages and that the two must go hand in hand, one cannot go without the other. The Hon. Member, Mr. Murray, said that we have every right to tell it as it is. We have no difficulty with people telling of the perspective of a democracy. The only problem is that you do not have any facts or evidence to corroborate these claims. Since you have none, who will believe you? Credibility is what matters and your arguments have no credibility whatsoever.

By the way, let us talk about corruption. It is so easy to come to this House and shout corruption. Why do they do this? They do this hoping to pluck the sympathy strings of the unsuspecting audience out there. It is like going to the library and selecting a book with a nice attractive glossy cover, but when you open a book you find nothing but empty pages. Yet you borrow that book and walk around with it pretending that you have something of value when you have nothing of value. So much about the empty rhetoric of corruption! What they wanted is for Minister Singh to sex up his speech and spice it up with bits and pieces of allegations of corruption here and there. Would this have been to their satisfaction? Would they have stopped? That is why soon after Mr. Murray left this chamber after Minister Ashni Singh had finished speaking, in less than half an hour, had this to say: “Nothing is said in the Budget to address the levels of corruption where huge sums are being leaked from the system to the pockets of cronies.” [Mr. Murray: Yes and I will stand by that] Well let me tell you what I stand by. I ask: Where are the facts? Where is the evidence? If you do not want to give the evidence to the Integrity Commission, if you do not want to give the evidence to the police, if you do not want to give the evidence to the Kaieteur News and if you do not want to give it anywhere else, then “you can put it in your pipe and smoke it.”

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member, Mrs. Sheila Holder...

Mr. Speaker: Before you go to Mrs. Sheila Holder, your time is now up.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes more to continue his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Rohee: ...spoke about the misuse of power at every stratum of the Government system and the Hon. Member, Mrs. Clarissa Riehl, echoed those very thoughts. She also went on to say that the Budget debate has become a charade. I wonder if the Hon. Member, Mrs. Sheila Holder, heard the Hon. Member, Dr. Bheri Ramsaran, when he spoke about the plane loads of persons who left Guyana every two weeks to benefit from Operation Miracle in Cuba. Also of the efforts of that the Government has put in place to ensure that the thousands affected are provided with the state of the art medical treatment at home and abroad. Is that a charade?

The Hon. Member, Mrs. Sheila Holder. I ask if she heard from the good doctor about the medical services provided now within forty-five minutes to one hour to persons who visit the recently built medical facilities at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation for medical treatment. And also about the dental facilities that is offered to patients. Is that a misuse of State power? I ask Mrs. Holder: Did the Hon. Member hear about the hundreds of young people sent to Cuba who have returned as qualified young professionals? Is that a charade? And the country, I submit that all we have done, from this side of the House, is to show how the Government uses public funds and State power for the benefit of our people. By the way, who are the beneficiaries of these programmes, projects and facilities? Is it not your supporters? Is it not our supporters? Are they not Guyanese who have a right to these facilities?

Why is it that year after year Opposition benches seek to denigrate these sound developmental projects and pretend that they do not exist? They even go so far to claim that nothing is happening in the country. Is it so illogical? Is it so hard to bear? Is it so painful? Is it so politically blinding? Everyone in this country uses these facilities. Yet the P.N.C.R.-1G. Members come to this House and try to throw dust in the eyes of the viewing public in an attempt to wish away these positive developments. Why just for the sake of politicking they made statements to the effect that there is nothing in the Budget for the people? Is it just for the sake of politics?

The Hon. Member, Mrs. Deborah Backer, spoke about the crime and asked why the population has lost faith in the police. Is that the reason why we do not report occurrences? I do not agree with this. I do not know where she has gotten her facts from that people do not report occurrences at police stations. The question of domestic violence was raised. I want to ask this question. What has the P.N.C.R.-1G. done as a party to support the Stamp It Out

Campaign? Tell us what concrete initiatives and activities your party has organised to address the issue among your members and supporters within the wider society?

Members of the Opposition take up their seats in the National Assembly, in my respectful view, only to make a host of outlandish and unsubstantiated statements, many of which have no connection with reality. When one listens to the Opposition, you get the impression that everything is collapsing around us and that we are doing worst than they did. Now listen to this, when you put the twenty-eight years of damage that the P.N.C. did to the country according to the P.P.P., together with the seventeen years of damage you said that we have done to Guyana over the seventeen years, when you add those two together, twenty-eight years of damage by the P.N.C. said by the P.P.P., and the seventeen years of damage to Guyana by the P.P.P. said by the P.N.C., then what do we have in Guyana? Where does that take us as a nation? In fact, no one should be living here. I ask the Opposition Leader that question.

When you look around Guyana you can only marvel at the improvements made in every sector over the past decade or so. Who has benefited from these impressive improvements? It is the people of Guyana. It is your supporters. It is our supporters. It is the Guyanese who do not support you and the Guyanese who do not support us, but they benefit from these projects. They use those projects. While these leaders who stand or pretend to stand aloof from the forces of developments, their supporters are actively participating and benefiting from these proceeds. When the Hon. Member, Mrs. Backer, said that she wants a total shift from the police force's brute force approach, we agree to a certain extent, but with the caveat laid down by the President when he said in his speech at the opening of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police...

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, could we be guided please as much for future use as for now as to your ruling on the use of the president's name and in terms of his quotations on what he said to influence the House because there seems to be a shifting position. We would like to be guided so that in the future we would know how to proceed.

Mr. Speaker: What...what...

Mrs. Backer: The Hon. Member for the second time is quoting from what the President said obviously in an effort to influence the House. So I am just asking for your guidance.

Mr. Speaker: There is no rule that I am aware of that says that a Member cannot refer to words or speeches or language used by the President. There is nothing which says that the person cannot use those words in a normal debate either on this side of the House, or on this side of the House. There is nothing which prevents that. There is a rule that says the President's words cannot be used to influence debate, but that is a very fine point.

Mrs. Backer: Sir that is what we are trying to get guidance on. When is that fine point...

Mr. Speaker: There will be a substantially written opinion on that for your benefit soon.

Mrs. Backer: Much oblige.

Mr. Speaker: Very soon, it is already in draft.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I expect that those five minutes that were taken away from me will be added to me. This is what the President said in relation to this matter. This is responding to Mr. Edward Greene, Deputy Secretary General of the Caribbean Community Secretariat. "Yes Mr. Greene, we need brute force because when you have people shooting at you with AK-47s. You need to send out brute force with AK-47s to get back at them. You cannot get out there and smile and shake hands and negotiate". The President went on to stress: "Policy Makers need to be unambiguous in their support for their security forces. He added that: "There should be care with regards to human rights." He explained that: "It sometimes appeared that the scale is tilted more in favour of the perpetrators than the victims and that cannot be right." He went on further and finally to say: "The organisations that tout human rights need to take into consideration that there are sometimes psychopaths with AK-47s rifles slathering people out there..."

When we talk about a total shift from the policy of brute force approach, I know exactly where the Hon. Member was coming from.

I want to move off from that rather limited approach and to say that what we would like to see on our part is the total shift in the approach of the Opposition from the old and antiquated ways befitting the days of yore when the Opposition party conduct themselves in a more modern and holistic way of operating. And which takes into consideration all of the new and emerging external and local factors which would help you to redefine your role in these modern times. When we hear the Hon. Member, Mr. Aubrey Norton, make reference to the

need to overhaul the entire diplomatic structure, what he really should have admitted was the need to overhaul his party and bring it into conformity with modern times. We worry and are concerned therefore about what this country would come to when we hear statements like this. We have many challenges and we recognise that there are challenges. Any developing country would face enormous challenges. There is no magic wand. There is no crystal ball. Notwithstanding all the objectives and indicators that may be indicating that we should be following, I say that it is a question of effort, building and of working together.

We do not agree when the Hon. Member, Mr. Raphael Trotman, said that the failure of the Government has failed to implement the enhanced political framework of cooperation. We do not agree with that statement. This is not true. There was a national stakeholder's forum which broadened the whole concept of the enhanced political framework of cooperation. The Hon. Members would know that four meetings were convened at the Office of the President, under the rubric... **[Member: Under what circumstances?]** It does not matter under what circumstances. The fact of the matter is that it enhanced political cooperation and the parties agreed that other stakeholders should be involved in those meetings. Further to that, the parliamentary parties met in June and signed an agreement on the question of House-to-House Registration together with the Guyana Elections Commission (G.E.C.O.M.). All of these are part and parcel of the enhanced political cooperation.

I would like to assure this House that as a Member of the Defense Board there is no intention and move to weaken the Guyana Defense Force (G.D.F.). So when I hear about the need to ensure that the G.D.F. is not weakened to defend our territorial integrity and national sovereignty, I do not know where this came from. However, I can assure this House that the Defense Board has never taken any decision, policy or otherwise to weaken the G.D.F. In fact, all the decisions of the Defense Board, *vis-a-vie*, the Guyana Defense Force is aimed at enhancing the overall capacity of that organisation to ensure that this country's borders and integrity are protected. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Member.

Mr. Corbin: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I must admit that I was taken by the surprise by the sudden suasion of words coming from the Hon. Member. I want to say that on the eve of this 40th Anniversary of the Republic and in the 46th year of our political independence, I rise on behalf of the Opposition, the P.N.C.R.-1G., to wind up this debate on the 2010 Budget. I am confident that on this significant anniversary we would have all wished that the 2010 Budget

could have been a cherished and welcomed Republic gift to all the people of Guyana. Regrettably, as many speakers have highlighted over the past five days, it imposes burdens and provides no real light. I want Mr. Rohee to listen carefully. It provides no light at the end of the proverbial tunnel of development for our beloved country Guyana. In fact, it has turned out to be, as the P.N.C.R.-1G. state it and he read it: “long on words, but short on vision” and I will explain that. And such a case has already been made and is beyond question by the speakers on that side and even by the presentations by the Members on the other side of this House.

The statistics presented in this Budget itself accompanied by the lengthy narrative, the explanations or perhaps excuses provided by various Governmental speakers including the last speaker and the presentations or exposures presented by speakers from the Opposition benches, clearly suggest that had this been a judicial forum, my intervention this afternoon would have been very brief with the simple submission of *res ipsa loquitur*.

Unfortunately Sir, you are not empowered to rule in this court on such submissions given the fact that heresy, misinformation, misrepresentation, even slander and mischievous propaganda appear all admissible in this court as we heard a few moments ago. So I have to tire a little longer to again present some information to enforce the arguments that have been made during the last five days. While being touted that this is the largest Budget ever, it does not adequately impact the improvement of the quality of life of Guyanese. I would like the Hon. Member who spoke a few moments ago, instead of dealing in generalities, to have explained how this would impact upon the improvement of the quality of life of the ordinary Guyanese. In my humblest submissions Sir, the Budget does not present any coherent plans to create the necessary economic and social conditions to lift the growing army of *pauperised* Guyanese out of poverty.

When we hear the various speakers shouting of these large allocations with their chests raised high, especially my young rookie Minister friend, one gets the impression that the money for this Budget is coming from one’s personal checking account of these speakers to the people of Guyana. The question must be asked: Who is paying for this Budget, Hon. Gentlemen? The way the last speaker spoke I thought that this Budget was coming from Freedom House. Will this \$142.2 billion come from the newly opened Casino which commenced operation without this National Assembly being presented with the regulations? I wish to remind this House that the Railroad Casino Legislation require that regulations be presented to support it,

but to date we have not seen any except what we read in the newspapers. So I do not know if the \$142.8 billion is coming from there. I may have missed it, but I did not hear the Hon. Member, the Hon. Pastor, who I believe is part of the strong religious folk protesting that legislation, say anything about this Casino in his presentation. Like the overseas voting and the 1980 Constitution, the issue appears to be determined by where you sit at various times and whether or not you are in or out of Government, but that is another matter.

In question is: Who is paying for this Budget? The burden of some 16% Value-Added Tax remains a milestone around the people's necks in this country. The tax that was originally touted by the Minister of Finance as "revenue neutral", this and excise taxes in 2009 were 20.4% higher than in 2008. Despite the Minister's declaration of no new or increased taxes in 2010, these two taxes are budgeted to increase a further 7.1% over 2008 and accounts for 50.15% of the total tax revenue this year. It therefore does not require any genius to determine who will bear the burden of this \$142.8 billion Budget in this country. It is the taxpayers, largely from the army of the working poor category who, Mr. Minister, have a constitutional right as provided under Article 13 of the Constitution to be properly consulted on matters affecting their wellbeing. But according to Mr. Rohee, he does not have to consult. He can march madly ahead without regard to anybody.

The silly arguments presented by some people about the party having a mandate because of the manifesto and face in the elections, has no place on the issue and is irrelevant to this context having regard to the supremacy of the Guyana Constitution under Article 13. The repeated failure to address the income tax threshold has already been explained and that means a large proportion of the 6% increase in wages and salaries to public servants will return to Mr. Kurshid Sattaur at the Guyana Revenue Authority with little benefits to the workers of this country. The escalating cost of living particularly increased cost of food items will ensure that workers earning minimal wages and salaries remain close to the poverty line. While old age pensioners, although the Hon. Minister has been boasting about these fancy conditions to pensioners, will continue to be disadvantaged. Consequently, while the Budget announces huge allocations in several sectors, they have little relevance to take the large and increase numbers of Guyanese out of poverty and that is what Mr. Rohee needs to understand.

The Hon. Member Mr. Rohee spoke, about corruption. I was rather confused, because it is known! I do not know if the Hon. Member Mr. Rohee is not aware of what is happening

around the world. Maybe, he is too busy with security and intelligence matters, and establishing this new Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.). But it is known that Guyana ranks high on the World's Corruption Index and the huge leakages from the public purse continue to be highlighted in reports from the Auditor General and elsewhere.

6.43 p.m.

But not a word is mentioned about it in the budget. The Auditor General has not mentioned it. I will like to recommend, Sir, that the Hon. Member enjoys the offer by the Hon. Minister Ramsarran about the new facilities at Port Mourant, if he has not read this in the Auditor General's report. Not a word has been mentioned about corruption and the belated references by the Minister of Public Service during her presentation could not be convincing in the absence of any commitment by the Hon. Member Mr. Ramotar and the P.P.P. to the establishment of the Procurement Commission in 2010. Other than that, the budget confirms that the P.P.P.'s administration has no interest in addressing the problem of corruption and discrimination. Hon. Member Mr. Rohee seems to be living somewhere else, Sir.

I had not planned to deal with this matter but I was looking at a document only this afternoon. Let me read what it says, *Poor Governance Since 1992*. [Mr. Hinds: Whose document is it?]. It is my own document. [Member: Talk about the I.D.B.] I will come to the Inter-American Development Bank. I prepared the document so that I do not have to quote the source. I prepared it for an exhibition: *Forty Years of the Republic – the Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, and this is part of the exhibition. Let me read for Members what it says. The first item – “On Parallel Levels of Corruption and the Blatant Lack of Accountability by the Administration”.

“The stone scam, the gold scam, the law book scam, the re-migrant duty-free scam, the Cane Grove conservancy dam scam, the Institute of Applied Science and Technology (I.A.S.T.) scam, the export of dolphin scam, the polar bear scam, the wild life scam, the flagrant and continued abuse of lotto funds...”

Shall I stop there? Let me continue.

“Cocaine in lumber, cocaine in molasses, cocaine in rice, cocaine in cricket bats, cocaine in fish, the phenomena of state involvement in death squads in Guyana under the former Home Affairs Minister, monumental proportions of

drug trafficking, torture, malpractices and unprofessional conduct within the security ranks, the horrors of the massacres of Lusignan and elsewhere”

But perhaps Hon. Member Mr. Rohee, Sir, was too busy with security matters when he seeks to paint the picture that nothing is happening in Guyana. Everything is hunky-dory, and bright and beautiful. But I do not want to be diverted on that issue.

The fact is that this budget has failed to effectively address the issue of unemployment and the allocation of resources for specialised training of young people outside of the long established training institutions. It maintains a policy of discrimination that ensures the continued strangulation of Critchlow Labour College. I do not know what will happen now since I am told they had appointed one Mr. English as the man to resuscitate it. Poor Mr. Komal Chand! I do not know what will happen to him and his Trade Union School now that he has appointed another friend of mine as his Principal. Surely, we will see all kinds of discrimination in allowing these institutions to be able to have allocations that they can proceed with proper training, if this Government is serious about it.

Mr. Speaker, the targets identified for 2010 are also unachievable, and this what the Hon. Member Mr. Rohee must understand. Despite the prediction of economic growth, the production projections in our major sectors, apart from gold mining, are not promising. We are already seeing some of the effects of that with *El Niño*, but I will come to that a little later. What is more surprising is despite the desire of the P.P.P. Government, and I quote:

“...neither be distracted nor diverted from the task of working together to build our country.”

I could not believe that that was in the budget after listening to Hon. Member Mr. Rohee a few moments ago. But if he would look at page 63 of the Budget Speech he will find those words which state:

“...neither be distracted nor diverted from the task of working together to build our country.”

Paragraph 6.6. Amazingly though, those two paragraphs do not address the issue at all, in fact boast – and I would come to this before I conclude – “...good governance continuing to function effectively”

And that

“Government continues to engage stakeholders extensively on major policies, programmes and issues.”

This is like the magic that the Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee, was trying to convince us existed in this country a few moments ago. Perhaps the Government is living in another world. But certainly where I stand I am yet to see any evidence of any of this in this country. Which such major misrepresentations which are being accepted in this National Assembly, and some of the speakers, like the Hon. Member, a few moments ago, appearing to believe their own propaganda, the Government appears set to proceed like an ostrich, irrespective of what is said by anyone in this Hon. House; another very clear example of its commitment to consultation and its misstatement that the Parliament functions effectively. That is in this budget by the Hon. Minister – that Parliament functions effectively.

Before I elaborate more on some of the issues, allow me to add my words of welcome to the two new elected Members of the National Assembly - I almost was distracted from that by the Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee – they are Mrs. Dawn Hastings and Mr. Lloyd Joyston Pereira, and congratulate them on their election to this Hon. House. I hope that they will use their time here to represent their communities and the people of Guyana, generally. I also hope that they are not disillusioned and disappointed, as many before them have been, at the arrogance and intransigence, and lack of receptivity to new and innovative ideas by those who now temporarily occupy the seat of Government.

I assure them, these new Members, that there will be periods of frustration. I can speak with authority on this matter, as I first entered this Hallow Chamber since June, 1973 – thirty-seven years ago. I believe then I have earned the privilege to give advice to young people in this Chamber, particularly to those who may not have even been born when I entered here. Indeed, I could have been here sooner in 1968. But alas! When I was summoned by the late L. F. S. Burnham, I had to reveal that I was only twenty years old, and the age of majority then was twenty-one. Thanks to the P.N.C. in Linden Forbes Burnham. It was after those 1968 elections that the age of majority and the right to vote was reduced to eighteen out of recognition of the significant role that youth can play in development.

That is what was done by the P.N.C. to give an opportunity to young men like Irfaan Ali. [Mr. Ramotar: Speak the true.]. You only had it in ideas. It was passed under the P.N.C. I do not see the young Member here. But when the young Member, Hon. Ms. Manickchand, again used this forum to engage in her childhood reflections, as she sought to

do, when she spoke of her youth in Berbice, and the rice farmers, or Mahaicony - wherever it was, I hope she also remembers that it was the P.N.C. which, very early in Guyana's journey on the road to Republican status, recognised and gave opportunity for young people of this country to take their rightful place in this House and make contributions to national development.

I also want to give some advice to my new Member, Mr. Pereira, who utilised time during his first speech to regale the Opposition on what the P.N.C. did not do in Amerindian areas, and how much P.P.P. did since 1992, that he should not fall prey to propaganda. He is not here to praise Caesar, but to honour the oath that he took in this Hon. House.

The new Hon. Member must know of the constant improvement of the quality of life of the indigenous people of this country since Independence. It is, therefore, disingenuous and disservice to those valiant and patriotic forbearers who led the way in representing the indigenous people of Guyana in this National Assembly of the Parliament, to suggest that the development of Amerindians commenced in 1992 in this country. I refer to such persons as the Hon. Members like Philip Duncan, Abel Dorrick, Dianne Abrahams from Monkey Mountain, Patricia Fredericks from Region 1, just to name a few who had come to this House, long before him, and to say it is a disservice to think that Amerindian indigenous development commenced in 1992. He will be doing a disservice to old stalwarts in his own village of Wakapau, such as Mabel Sandy, who paddled from that village all the way from the Upper Pomeroon - yes, that was the old days - to Parika to meet then Prime Minister Burnham to represent the indigenous people of this country.

And thereafter, I want to point out that it was that kind of representation and recognition of our indigenous people which resulted in the first Amerindians Conference in this country since 1966. Look at the *1966 Guyana Year Book*. Titles to Amerindian communities were issued under the P.N.C., and this rewriting of history as if it was something that is just happening. What he is doing is perfecting that gift of the P.N.C. That is another example of an indigenous... That Hon. Member knows him. He was there long before 1992. He should tell his Hon. Comrade. So when they believe the struggle for the indigenous people began in 1992... The Hon. Member needs to run some educational classes so we do not have an irresponsible statement being made in this House. This country has produced ophthalmologists. Right here, we have Dr. George Norton. He did not come here in 1992. There are economists, aircraft pilots, engineers, and even the late Minister who has not so

long departed - all produced in this country by the policies. When I look on that side of the House I see qualified people who could not have started their education since 1992. So let us put history in the proper context as the very Hon. Minister Rodrigues advised us to do.

No one will deny and I am not denying that these developments in the indigenous communities have continued since 1992, as we are so often reminded in this House. We cannot forget that they have continued. But they must be put in the proper context as I have just attempted to do a few moments ago. I want to point out to those who spoke glibly, particularly the Minister of Amerindian Affairs, that indigenous development and development of indigenous communities are not just a simplistic listing of gifts and infrastructural works as some have attempted to do in this House. This village was given solar panels; that village has been given tractors; how many villages have gotten engines, especially close to election time, and my good friend, Harripersaud Nokta, knows a lot about that - how many more scholarships were awarded, etc.

The indicators of the development of indigenous people and their communities must be analysed in a more substantial way such as the increase in availability of quality education per capita to Hinterland residents. Mrs. Dawn Hastings in her very first presentation in this House pointed out that despite the high expenditure of a school at Waramadong and those places, we were not getting the benefit of the quality of education because the infrastructure there lacks the facilities to give that quality of education. We must ask to what extent per capita has productivity increased in these communities; how much self reliance, particularly in food commodities, has been achieved leading to a reduction of the dependency syndrome in many of these areas. [Mr. Ramotar: You do not know what you are talking about.]

I am saying those are the yardsticks with which one has to measure; not list these things.

In reviewing the Budget 2010, the challenge is not to boast about the huge expenditure in various sectors and highlight projects to be undertaken, but to seriously analyse whether those allocations are reasonable to advance development and improve the quality of life. Let me give some examples, since the Hon. Member said the P.N.C.R.-1G. had no evidence. Education and agriculture development in the Upper Mazaruni: the P.P.P. administration has shouted for years about huge expenditures in educational facilities, including the new residential school at Waramadong. I visited that school not so long ago. After all that expenditure, there is no laboratory and no craft centre. Of what real benefit was the expenditure in relation to delivery of quality education? Similarly, we have heard from the

Minister of Agriculture who, like Saul on the road to Damascus, was bragging about his “Grow More Food Campaign” and huge expenditure in agriculture. I smile every time I hear the young Minister speaks. I wonder if he was old enough to remember some other slogans, not only the ones that Hon. Member Mr. Rohee spoke about, but slogans like “Be Local. Buy Local.” “Grow More Food”. “Feed, Clothe and House Programme”, all of which, like is happening now, were scoffed upon by these very Members of the P.P.P. when they sat on this side of the House.

All of them scoffed upon them, but now they are vying to shout as though this “Grow More Food” is something that has just been invented. The way they are behaving on that side of the House is exactly the way they have behaved when they sat over here when P.N.C. spoke of “Grow More Food”. And they talk about highest standards in this National Assembly! I was here long enough to know. I told you how long I have been here to know about standards. I do not know, Sir, if they are speaking about contributions from that side of the House, but we have high standards of presentation on the issues from this side of the House.

How does the Minister’s new slogan... Let us take his new slogan as the Minister would like us to do: “Grow More Food.” What does that slogan mean to the Upper Mazaruni in terms of agriculture development? Of what value is the expenditure to pay two Agricultural Officers, as I see in the Estimates, and have them sitting down at Kamarang and they cannot visit any farm in the Upper Mazaruni? We are wasting expenditure. So that to speak about diversified agriculture and all of that that the Minister was speaking about, and putting money in the budget by itself does not guarantee this diversified agriculture. [Mr. Rohee: That is hearsay.]

I am giving you a fact. Go and check it. Ask the Minister. There is no transportation. When I look at the Estimates for Region 7 for transportation for 2010... Go and look at it. There is one million dollars there for transportation for Region 10. What is the plan? What is the vision for making the Upper Mazaruni self-sufficient in food, having regard to its potential and the cost of transporting food from that area to the Coast?

The irony is that while the Government boasts of this big plan for diversification, there is no effort in that Upper Mazaruni; no vision as to how it can make this place self-sufficient when the cost of even transporting food to that area is so expensive by aircraft.

We were regaled in the budget, and this is another example. The Government wants evidence; this is another evidence. We heard about a road to Kako in the budget. The Government started to construct one some time ago - expended money, cut down bush. It was

a wonderful project. The Opposition would have patted the Government on the back for it. But eventually, all of that has grown up in forest again. But this year we see \$17 million put again, and the heading says: Development of Roads, somewhere in Bartica and also road to Kako. Certainly it was a valuable road which would have opened lands for agriculture. But what is the use of the Government is saying it is doing development when, in fact, it is short-sighted in its vision and it is not applying the expenditure in areas that can bring tangible results.

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Member.

Mr. Carberry: Mr. Speaker, could the Hon. Member be permitted 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Corbin: Mr. Speaker I can give several other examples to show the short-sighted vision. What is, for example, the vision for agricultural development in Region 9, particularly in the context of this new Takatu Bridge between Brazil and Guyana, and the proposed Lethem-Linden Highway? What is the vision? The Minister just regaled us about being close to Brazil. What is the vision?

Guyana is responsible for agriculture in CARICOM. Some time ago we heard an announcement..., just like how the Minister is announcing all these things that the President said. The President said many other things. One of them, he said, was that Caribbean nationals were being attracted to invest in agriculture in Guyana. At one time I even heard a report that a colleague of Minister Mia Mortley, who had a meeting in her constituency telling the people that there was cheap land in Guyana. Cheap lands in Guyana which Guyanese were not getting! But we have heard nothing. Where is this in the budget? What has happened to this plan? So the Hon. Minister should do not regale us about what the President said. He said many other things and they never happened. That is the point I am making.

Where is the plan for this agricultural development? At one time we heard another bright idea from the Hon. Minister of Agriculture - hill rice in Rupununi. Big advertisement: Brazilian investors are coming for hill rice in Rupununi. I am still looking to see this hill rice. Maybe it had rolled down the hill. Where is this vision for Region 9's agricultural development? The real issue is the lack of vision in using this expenditure for the development of the people.

The Minister of Amerindian Affairs told us during this debate – and she gleefully told us - about these villages that would receive new tractors, increased production of peanuts, cashew nuts and other products in the villages that should make them self-sufficient. [Ms.

Sukhai: My speech never said that.] Yes, you said tractors are going here. This place has solar power but that is meaningless if you have no vision. How do these tractors fit into your plan of developing the Rupununi to make it so productive that you can get the benefits of the trade between Guyana and Brazil that you are telling us about? Absolutely nothing in here! [Mr. Hind: It will happen.]. Yes, it will happen. Will it come out in a dream? Is that how you are hoping to get a vision, in signs and wonders?

I do not want to go into all the other examples that I have here but I want Mr. Rohee to understand that the P.N.C.R.-1G. is not here to share out kudos, because it seems like that is what Mr. Rohee wants. He wants us to have several trackmen over here to give, maybe, another Minister award for this; Agriculture Minister, award for very good publicity during the year; Hon. Member Donald Ramotar, an award for a very prospective presidential candidate.

I do not know what the Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee, expects. The Opposition is here to do its job. The Government has been elected by the people of Guyana to perform. It is not doing anybody a favour. It fought for the work, it has to perform! The Opposition is here to hold its toes to the fire and see it performs according to the mandate it is given. The Government should not boast about doing this and doing that. Yes, the Opposition expects it to do that. The Opposition's job, very simply, is to say to the Government, while it may be doing well in certain areas, there are opportunities to do better if it takes its advice. That is all the Opposition is trying to tell the Government. Do not let the Hon. Member Mr. Rohee confuse the National Assembly this afternoon, about the P.N.C.R. not being constructive. He seems to have a convenient memory.

The P.N.C.R.-1G. brought a motion here on tax reform a long time ago. What has happened with it? It took a long time before the Opposition heard something about it this year in the budget. It brought a motion here asking for a bipartisan group to update this National Development Strategy. [Mr. Ali: Ask for G.W.I. and water.] I am coming to that. This document is a citizens' document. A motion was brought here. The P.N.C.R.-1G. said it is concerned about working with the Government to improve the continued the development in this country. What did it hear? It was totally ignored and contemptuously dismissed by the

Minister of Finance who said he knew it all. That is what it was told when it brought it here. Do not tell the Members that P.N.C./R.-1G. is not constructive! Perhaps I should give the Hon. Minister of Finance some advice – equal advice to my very young rookie Minister, the Hon. Member Mr. Irfaan Ali. Forbes Burnham, our leader, once told us that “arrogance and insensitive behaviour do not go hand in hand with service to people. Humility is the key to persuasion.” That is what I want to remind him.

The P.N.C.R.-1G. brought a Motion about Colonial Life Insurance Company (C.L.I.C.O.) and said “look - you made a guarantee - let us work together to get C.L.I.C.O. sorted out.” It had to struggle like hell to... Excuse me Sir, I withdraw that word. It had to struggle vigorously to do all kinds of amendments to get the Government to honour a commitment that both President and many people in Government had made about working together.

The P.N.C.R.-1G. sought to get this National Assembly to meet to discuss the Lusignan massacre. It never met until after the Government did all it had wanted to do. Then there was the Bartica massacre. That was what we on this side of the House did - trying to contribute to national development.

The most recent example is after a visit I made to Matakai, recently, Matthews Ridge, Port Kaituma and Arakaka. There were many problems there. I did not come back and criticise. I have sent out letters to Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Co. Ltd. (GT&T) and Digicel pointing out that the people are in need of better telephone services. I wrote Guyana Water Incorporated (G.W.I.) and have copied the letter to the Hon. Minister. He did not read that letter. He read some bogus letter, according to him, which was saying that the people at Bare Root have wonderful power. But I will come to him in a minute. I wrote letters to the Health Minister and to the Hon. Prime Minister who is right in front of me. Sir, do you know that in less than 24 hours I have gotten replies from the two private sector organisations, Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Co. (GT&T) and Digicel, saying what their plans were. I am still waiting for a reply to those letters from all the Ministers. Not one from the state sector has replied to tell me what it is doing. They tell us they want cooperation. I wrote them. I have copies of the letters, here so I am not making this up. The Prime Minister must know that.

7.13 p.m.

These are issues that the Opposition needs to take seriously when the Hon. Minister Rohee says to this House that it does not work. I made constructive suggestions. Let me read this one section of the letter to the Prime Minister. In the letter to the Prime Minister, I said:

“I wish to recommend that an interdisciplinary planning team be urgently identified and appointed to draft a new development plan for the Matakai Subregion of Region 1 which would take account of its potential in agriculture, particularly livestock, forestry, mining and tourism. Such an approach would lift the present gloom and despair of the citizens in that Subregion.”

That is what I wrote to the Prime Minister; not destruction. I said look, “that is what we can do to improve the quality of life.” I do not want to waste time with the other speakers here.

Let me deal quickly with some misrepresentations, not only by the Hon. Mr. Rohee, Sir, but the budget itself. There are several misrepresentations in the budget statement itself, and several misrepresentations by persons who spoke in this debate. One of course has been well ventilated in the letter columns and in articles in the newspapers. I will only refer my good friends to the *Stabroek News*, *Sunday, February 21, 2010* issue where there appeared two articles. “Unemployment in Guyana: numbers, implications, recommendations” and the other one, “Numbers are what you want them to be”. I think the Hon. Member, the Minister of Finance, should read that.

The first article estimates unemployment to be close to twenty-five per cent and lamented the absence of unemployment statistics, and emphasised for the longest while Government representatives do not incorporate unemployment in their charts and graphs. Similarly, true to form one has seen absolutely nothing in this budget. Mr. Basil Williams, in his presentation, elaborated on this matter so I would not deal with it.

The second article dealt with rebasing National Accounts and updating the basket of goods for the Consumer Price Index. The Minister of Finance informed this National Assembly that with effect from this year the Government would be fully adopting a rebased framework for Guyana’s National Accounts and an updated basket of goods and services for computation of the Consumer Price Index - pages 53 to 57 of the Budget Debate. Obviously, the P.N.C.R. supports the rebasing of our National Accounts and the updating of the basket of goods and services for computing the C.P.I. Indeed, it has been calling for that for a long time as the

Hansard would show every Budget Debate Mr. Murray has been making that point. It welcomes that development. But the rebasing of the accounts and the revision of the C.P.I. basket make fundamental changes, and the possible outcomes after the revisions have immense national importance. Consequently it believes it to be a necessary precondition to implementation of such fundamental changes to have consultation with academia, Parliamentary Political Parties and other stakeholders to both explain the proposals and to have inputs. I have to agree with the writer in the second article referred to above when he concluded, and I quote:

“With mistrust everywhere it is sad, but not unexpected, that official statistics and reports of transactions are not well regarded by Guyanese.”

It does not require a genius Mr. Speaker, of this I.T. age to find relevant and up-to-date information, as Mr. Nadir is fond of saying, “just google the websites.” He tells us that regularly. Well I did a lot of that, and if any Member wishes to do so it would become clear, and I hope Hon. Member Mr. Rohee does it soon, that the figures presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance in this budget cannot bear scrutiny. I am not saying it wilfully. I am saying they cannot bare scrutiny.

I invite Members to peruse the data on the World Development Indicators 2009, found on the World Bank’s site. Yes, they can visit the site. Then there is Guyana Economic Statistics produced by Economy Watch, the last update on February 21st, 2010. I perused that site this morning, and it is interesting to review the Gross Domestic Product (G.D.P.) growth between 1992 and 2008. Interestingly enough, despite all of the figures put forward by the Ministers, it will show that the economy has not grown, and I challenge the Government to produce these figures. Yes, and I want it to use... [Member: What is the name?] It is the World Bank site. It is not a magic site. Yes, I am saying to go. I have the index here where it shows:

“1992: Guyana, 8 per cent, 1993: 8 per cent, 1994: 9 per cent...”

That is benefiting from the Economic Recovery (E.R.P.) which Mr. Nokta likes to call Empty Rice Pot. The Government benefited from that. It continued to drop.

“1998: -2, 1999: 3, 2000: -1, 2001: 2, 2002: 1, 2003: -1, 2004: 3, 2005: -2, 2006: -2, 2007: -2, 2008: 3.”

If one aggregates that, one will see what the real position is. But of course the Guyana Government's statistics claim that in 2007, it had 5.1 per cent and a 5.4 per cent, respectively in growth. But the very World Bank says that one cannot rely on official statistics by the Government of Guyana. The very site tells that.

I want to refer you to an article in the *Stabroek News*, Thursday, February 11, 2010, [*Focus on Guyana's National Budget 2010*] written by Christopher Ram, which elaborates on this subject. I do not have time to deal with this, but I am saying that the Hon. Member Mr. Rohee should do not bamboozle the Opposition with these statistics. We can read. 'Google' it and it will be seen.

But the truth is the presentation of statistics from the World Bank site which says that Guyana is making progress. There are other statistics that are relevant. I want the Hon. Member to go to the World Health Organization site. I will tell him about some other relevant statistics. It says there, at the World Health Organization site:

“The under 5 mortality rate, that is the probability of dying at age 5 per 1, 000 birth, the regional average is 19, Guyana is 60, Barbados is 12...”

Go and check it. I am not guessing these figures. One can go and check it.

“Jamaica 31, Suriname 28, Dominica 14.”

“Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births: Barbados 16, Trinidad and Tobago 45, Suriname 72, Jamaica 170, Guyana 470.”

Those are relevant statistics.

“Malaria mortality rate per 100,000 population: Regional Average 1, Haiti 8, Suriname 5, Guyana 10.”

There are statistics on that World Health Organization site which shows the ratio of health expenditure as a percentage of the G.D.P. and when one looks at those statistics one realises that this veneer of development that is presented do not resemble the reality of what is happening with development in this country.

I am running out of time. I do not have time to go the various paragraphs which have also attempted to paint a glossy picture. The Opposition does not want to see this country retrogress. It has an interest in promoting development in Guyana and that is why it is

bringing these things to the Assembly's attention. If it was not concerned it would not be making suggestions. I would not have written the Prime Minister and say: "Look, put in a developmental plan."

Look at paragraphs 4.9 to 4.11 of the Budget Speech. Look at those paragraphs. It clearly obscures the real problems faced by the sugar industry. Some of which have already been highlighted in this debate. See page 17. There are statements, let me quote, and hear what are the words:

"...emerged with a sugar industry that is efficient and competitive, and equipped to convert opportunities that are emerging..."

But not a word in the debate about how these opportunities will be grasped or where they are coming from. They are veneered in the words. The Opposition would like to see the sugar industry prosper, but the Government must not paint a veneer. Let us face the reality. P.N.C./R.-1G. had offered suggestions of a technical team to help the Government. A few moments ago, the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs scoffed at it. He said: "Well, we can go alone. So you are blowing hot and cold." Hot and cold, nest of vipers, and all these things, and still the Government wants us to cooperate.

Look at paragraphs 4.17 and 4.19. Tell me when I have 10 minutes more.

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up Mr. Corbin.

Mr. Carberry: Mr. Speaker, could the Hon. Member be granted 10 minutes to complete his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Corbin: Time does not permit me to show the veneer that has been painted in the paragraphs, even, not only in the statistics, the writing - beautiful writing. That is why the P.N.C.R.-1G. says it is "long on words and short on vision." It does not want to be unnecessarily critical. It has praised the Hon. Minister of Finance on occasions, but the Government must understand that the Opposition is here to tell it the truth, so do not expect the Opposition to tell it that "it is beautiful".

I will just touch on and name some paragraphs for the Hon. Minister Rohee and Hon. Prime Minister to read. Look at paragraph 4.25 and paragraph 4.26 which deal with what the

Government calls “abundant opportunities to improve trade and economic relations between Brazil and Guyana”. The Prime Minister told me a few minutes ago, “The plan is coming soon.” So what are the words based on?

Look at paragraph 4.36 to paragraph 4.38 which boast of \$7.6 billion for roads and bridges in 2010. Of this \$7.6 billion for roads and bridges \$450 million is to be spent on major rehabilitation of the Mandela Avenue and the access road to Timehri, as well as designs for extending a four-lane highway on the East Bank, to Grove. That is what the Minister tells us. No one will deny that this ‘piece deal’ approach has resulted in a traffic nightmare on the East Bank. It is clearly a lack of vision. The Government is trying to think and fix something that is not workable in the long-term. What has happened with the plans for the highway from Mandela Avenue directly to link up with the Linden-Soesdyke Highway, with exits along the way to the various villages? Surely this is a better approach and the designs and plans for that are in the Prime Minister’s office. I left them there in 1992. I know what I am talking about. They are right there. The design and layout for that road going through Mandela Avenue are right there, but the Government is tinkering and spending \$450 million to tinker with a two-lane highway, and it cannot get rid of the traffic problem on the East Bank. The Government does not have a broad vision of the big future.

Let me conclude, Mr. Speaker, by dealing with the issue of governance. I can mention several other paragraphs, but let me deal with governance. I have to conclude by spending some time on this because this is the most amazing part of the budget, at paragraphs 4.144 and 4.145, which allegedly addresses the issue of governance. According to the Minister, and I quote:

“...good governance continues to function effectively.”

And I quote again.

“Government continues to engage stakeholders extensively on major policies programmes and issues.”

I attempt to forgive the Hon. Minister on his indiscretion and excuse it on exuberant youth. But I remember it is the very Hon. Minister, when the Opposition asked to give him assistance to review this very document, who said he could do it all alone. Therefore, he obviously has not read this document, a civil society document: *National Development Strategy: Eradicating Poverty and Unifying Guyana*. The Hon. Member Mr. Rohee probably has not made available to him this Security Sector Reform Plan for Guyana. I believe if the

Hon. Minister of Finance had read this, the Assembly would have had something more substantial addressing the issue of governance which is fundamental to taking this country forward, and to answer certain questions that Hon. Member Mr. Rohee seems to have a lack of ability to comprehend.

I would like to quote from this book, quickly and refer to the Hon. Minister of Finance and Hon. Minister Mr. Rohee, because at page 4 of this latter document which the Opposition had to struggle to get, even though the Government walked away from the British, here is what it says:

“A need to address root causes of criminal and political violence, poverty and unemployment, racial and political polarisation and deterioration in the moral and social fabric of Guyanese. These require taking on board the broad objectives of the multi-donor project involving improving social cohesion, security and governance in Guyana coordinated by the U.N.D.P. and designed to restore conditions for resumed development.”

Do the Members hear what it is saying? Not development, “resumed development”, because they have come to the conclusion, like you and I, that this cycle of political confusion that we have had over these years have not led us anywhere.

Look at this book. I refer the Hon. Minister to paragraph 3. I have read it umpteen times. I am sure you are tired of me. You must remember, Sir, me quoting from this book before, but it has appeared that the Minister has not read it. I would like to refer him to paragraph 3 of this book which tells him that one cannot talk about development if one does not address the fundamental issues. This is what it says here on page 7:

“Good governance is therefore characterised by participation, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, equity and strict adherence to the rule of law.”

Did the Minister hear that? He cannot come here and tell the Opposition that the Government is going to march all on its own and development would happen. I would like him to read the paragraph 3.110 which tells us that, and I quote it specifically for Hon. Member Mr. Rohee. I thought he read this when he started to speak this afternoon. I quote from paragraph 3:

“Successive Guyanese Governments have failed to appreciate that if consultation and participation were made essential stages in the exercise of

Government the frequent confrontations which have become an integral part of the country's life would be considerably reduced if not eliminated.”

Has the Member heard that? So while he wants to march on, he does not reading his own fundamental book. I did not manufacture that. It is here on page 3. I want to recommend to the Minister that before he reviews it all on his own, please read what is already there.

I want to say that this has to do with Local Government Elections and the issue of shared governance which, again, has been scoffed on by my good friends on the other side. The question of Local Government Elections relates to the fact that the P.P.P., in this National Assembly, has demonstrated a lack of commitment with respect to Local Government Elections by the manner in which it behaves with respect to the Local Authorities Elections Amendment Act, the Local Government Commission Act which reforms the management of local organs and its present attitude as it relates to Fiscal Transfers and the Local Government Amendment Act. All of which clearly suggests that it is not seriously ready to implement the full slate of reforms for local government. The P.N.C.R. has already spoken on this matter and I believe other Parties of the Opposition, and I want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, Hon. Member Mr. Rohee likes to make threats. I only repeat for emphasis that the completion of the reforms for Local Government is a prerequisite for the holding of Local Government Elections. Further I say not.

On the question of shared governance, I wish to conclude by expressing some thoughts on it which has quite appreciably attracted public debate in the letter columns of the national newspapers. I hope that this dialogue that I am seeing in the press and the letter columns will continue, but they would be meaningless if there is a lack of political will. Those of us who are here, like Hon. Members Mr. Rohee who wants progress, like Mr. Trotman who spoke earlier about trying to strive to the highest level, all that letter writing in the paper would be meaningless if there is a lack of political will to do what is necessary in the interest of Guyana.

After the recent cataclysmic earthquake in Haiti, writing in the P.N.C.R. weekly column of *Kaieteur News, Sunday, January 17, 2010*, I posed the question: “Is a tragedy necessary before shared governance becomes a reality?” I pointed to several lessons around the globe that may be instructive and I recommend this article for reading by all Members of this Hon. House. I had been very pleased to see a letter, from his former colleague – I do not know if he is still his colleague, I saw Mr. Ramotar seemed as though he was recruiting him as a

campaign manager, the other night - in the newspaper, by one Dr. Henry Jeffrey, who I believe occupied a seat not so long on this side of the House. I saw a letter in the paper, signed by his name, speaking on the issue of Local Government and he pointed to the Malaysian experience. Again, I recommend my friends to read it because I believe it is very instructive to all of us, so that we can move this country forward because while he pointed to the great economic strides of Malaysia, I want Hon. Member Mr. Rohee to look at the political formula that was applied in order to deal with racial, ethnic and class conflict in order to unify the people and bring about development. That is what shared governance will do for the advancement of this country.

Mr. Speaker: Time is rapidly running out Mr. Corbin.

Mr. Corbin: I conclude, Mr. Speaker, by extending 40th Republic Anniversary greetings to you and all Members of the National Assembly. I hope that the 41st year of the Republic will usher in a new resolve to take Guyana forward, which will result in visionary plans arrived at after genuine national consultation, and which will be reflected in realistic budgets that would be presented to this National Assembly. A resolve that would also see the Nation moving steadfastly to shared governance in the very near future. Thank you very much.
[Applause]

Dr. Singh (replying): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply honoured to make the concluding contribution to this segment of the debate on Budget 2010 which I presented before this Hon. House one week ago. I do so at the end of six days of rigorous and animated debate, over which period we witnessed strident and passionate expression of views by Members on both sides of the House. At moments, common goals were expressed and embraced, somewhat too rarely than would have been justifiably appropriate in my own estimation. Whilst at others, differences emerged and tempers flared, somewhat too frequently than was necessary, again in my own estimation. Throughout all of it, however, abundant opportunity was had and taken for the ideals of our young democracy to be reiterated, and for the status of this National Assembly, as the pinnacle deliberative forum of our political system, to be reaffirmed. For this, and quite frankly for the six days and nights of very hard work that it entailed, I believe that it would be neither remiss nor immodest of us to congratulate ourselves collectively as a House.

I have no doubt that there are some who might wish to question the value and utility of our exhaustive efforts in this House over the past six days, and indeed that there are even some

who might wish in the extreme to attach to our efforts some measure of futility. If there are those who would do so, and I believe they would thankfully be a very tiny minority, they would be terribly mistaken in their understanding of the objectives of the debate and in their assessment of its outcomes.

More than at any other occasion throughout the calendar, the Budget Debate provides a unique opportunity for those of us on the Government side of the House to articulate our philosophy for developing our country and for managing our economy, to describe our related policies, programmes and projects, to give a detailed account of our implementation of these over the recent past and our plan for these in the near, and not so near future, and to subject them to scrutiny and analysis. In this regard, I believe that any objective appraisal of the debate on Budget 2010 would conclude that the Government side of the House availed itself abundantly of this opportunity. Indeed, I have no doubt in my mind that if the question were to be asked whether the past six days have left the country better informed and even better convinced of Government's policies, programmes and projects for developing Guyana, the answer would be a resounding yes!

Simultaneously and similarly the Budget Debate provides a unique opportunity for those on the Opposition side of the House to scrutinise and analyse the development plans outlined by Government; to endorse and agree or commend these plans where they think they are appropriate, and surely there must be some common ground. Similarly, to criticise these plans where they think they are appropriate and hopefully to do so constructively, where our views and strategies diverge and, importantly, to outline their alternative plans for developing Guyana.

In doing so the Budget Debate provides us as a House, and as a country, with an important opportunity to discover the thinking of the Opposition on the matter of developing our country. Indeed, I have the view that the Budget Debate has the potential to tell us as much about the Opposition and its plans for developing Guyana, as it does about the Government and its plans for developing Guyana. In this regard, I believe that any objective appraisal of the Budget 2010 Debate would conclude that the Opposition destroyed whatever shred of credibility it might still have remaining by apparently blindfolding itself, and refusing to see the obvious progress taking place in our country, by refusing to commend Government for policies and programmes that are obviously commendable, by criticising everything for the

sake of criticising, and by failing miserably to articulate any iota of an alternative plan for developing Guyana.

At the end of the day I have no doubt that if the question were to be asked whether the past six days have left us any better informed of the Opposition's alternative policies, programmes and projects for developing Guyana, the answer would be a resounding no! Instead, the Government and the rest of the country were bombarded with personal insults, jibes and barbs from the Opposition, including such masterpieces as a lame and pathetic reinterpretation of the meaning of the acronym M.B.A.; repeated tirades against foreign investors and foreign nationals living and working in Guyana; regurgitated and anecdotal provocations and speculations and a shamelessly borrowed and blatantly baseless accusation that the Government thinks it knows it all - dutifully delivered, in my opinion, by one of the more respected Members of the Opposition under the watchful eye of the original author of that insulting untruth.

What was on display was an Opposition that has, as one of my colleagues on this side of the House already said, a diametrically different view from Government's, and a fundamentally flawed view of democracy, governance and government. An Opposition that is stuck in the past and that is backward-looking. An Opposition that is removed from reality and oblivious to the global and regional context that obtains in the world today. An Opposition that has very little, if anything, to offer in the effort to develop Guyana. But an Opposition that, nevertheless, is content to rely on distortion, manipulation and misrepresentation of truth and fact in the cause of political expediency, and in pursuit of its narrow political aims.

The Government, for example, regaled this afternoon by a lofty endeavour by the Hon. Member Mr. Trotman, my friend and brother, who delivered a lecture to this Hon. House, urging a change in the tone of the debate. He spoke of a new dispensation of cordiality, restoring proper relationships. I know he is an honourable man and my friend, as I said, and I am offering here advice in the same spirit that he offered advice to me. I do not wish to speculate whether the Hon. Member's intentions were somehow to distinguish himself as a statesman or to set himself apart from the others amongst whom he finds himself, or yet still to repair some wrong that was done by his colleagues on that side, and on this occasion I will say in that corner of the House. But I will say this to my friend, the Hon. Member Mr. Trotman, that that lecture would have better been delivered to the Members of his own Party before they spoke in this House. I will say without any fear of contradiction that he has

amongst his membership the source of some of the most vile and rabid statements made in this House, and particularly during this Budget debate. I say that without any fear of contradiction.

Similarly, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition shared with us, again, some words of wisdom that would be hard to disagree with. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition spoke of arrogance and insensitive behaviour are not going hand in hand and, he was quoting, I believe, from former President Burnham. He said “arrogance and insensitive behaviour do not go hand in hand with service to people” and the Hon. Leader of the Opposition commended humility as a virtue. My first reaction was to hope that the cameras were pointing squarely at him, because I do not believe that he was at that particular time a picture of virtue, but I am in fact... A picture of humility, I should have said.

7.43 p.m.

I do not believe at that time he was a picture of humility, but I am reminded of that distinguished British Parliamentarian, Sir Winston Churchill, speaking of Lord Avon and saying, and I quote: “Young Avon is a modest man. But then young Avon has much to be modest about”.

I say, Mr. Corbin would like us to believe that he is a humble man. Without a doubt he has much to be humble about. But to this matter, I will return later.

From the standpoint of our democratic processes I am pleased that the Opposition put itself on display in the manner that it has done over the past six days. In short, its arguments during the debates on Budget 2010 did it absolutely no credit.

It is neither necessary nor is it my intention to address all of the substantive points made by the Opposition during the course of this debate, my colleagues having already responded to most of them, and indeed, if I might add, ably and comprehensively so. Instead I will focus on a few particular themes that recurred during the debate. In so doing, I will merely state certain relevant facts, and leave each Member of this Hon. House and the public to draw his or her own conclusions there from.

Mr. Speaker, I turned to a matter of inclusiveness and the frequent references that were made to Article 13. For the benefit of those who might not be familiar with provisions of this

Article I should point out firstly that this Article in its current formulation derives not from the 1980 Constitution, but from the historic 2001 constitutional amendments. It reads thus:

"The principal objective of the political system of the State is to establish an inclusionary democracy by providing increasing opportunities for the participation of citizens, and their organisations in the management and decision-making processes of the State, with particular emphasis on those areas of decision-making that directly affect their well-being".

There is a veritable abundance of examples of how this Article has been given meaning and put into practical operations through actions taken by Government. I will highlight just a few examples. If the Government were to take the development our comprehensive Low Carbon Development Strategy, not only did it established a multi-stakeholder committee comprising representation from private sector, labour, youth, women, indigenous N.G.O.s, conservation N.G.O.s, mining and forestry producers, and independent professionals, but it launched a four-month consultation process that saw over ten per cent of the country's population participate in information sharing and consultation sessions.

At the request of the Government of Guyana, the Government of Norway engaged a respected international N.G.O. - The International Institute for Environment and Development - to provide independent advice to assist the consultation process. The report from the international N.G.O. is publicly available. I will quote from that report.

"The independent monitoring team finds that the process of multi-stakeholder consultation surrounding Guyana's LCDS has broadly follows principles derived from international best practice and has met these criteria. It is the opinion of this team, that the consultative process to the extent that its findings inform a revised LCDS can be considered credible, transparent, and inclusive."

I continue.

"The Government commitment to transparency and accountability has been commendable during the preliminary consultation process of the LCDS".

And the report goes on. Importantly, the same report notes both strengths and limitations of the consultation process and lays these out in detail. It is of particularly significant note that the foremost limitation of the consultative process observed by this N.G.O. was, and I quote:

"The non-engagement in the consultation process on the ground by the Opposition Members of Parliament and the Opposition political parties".

So here we have an example of a national consultation process launched, abundant opportunities in every community throughout the length and breadth of this country, and a political Opposition that calls for consultation and when the opportunity was presented refused to engage! [Mr. Corbin: You could not be serious.]. I am quoting from the report. These are not my words or the words of the Government. These are words of the report.

There are many other examples. Government has executed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Private Sector Commission establishing a National Competitiveness Council. I quote from that Memorandum:

"The National Competitiveness Council will be the main institution for high level public/private dialogue on the National Competitiveness Strategy and all competitiveness related issues".

It is chaired by the President and its membership include the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Finance, Tourism and Agriculture, the Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O.) of Guyana Office for Investment (GO-INVEST), the Chairman of the Private Sector Commission, Heads of the Association of Regional Chambers of Commerce, Heads of the Small Business Association, the Trade Union Congress (T.U.C.), Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (F.I.T.U.G.), etc. In every sector of Government's operations – in agriculture, there are the Agricultural Diversification Advisory Committee, with private sector representation, a Fisheries Advisory Committee, a National Cane Farmers Committee; in health, there are the National Tobacco Council, the National Mental Health Oversight Committee, the National Committee for Chronic Diseases. Like I said, there is a veritable abundance of examples. There is the Special Select Committee system here where stakeholders have come and provided input in the lawmaking processes.

At the same time, ours is a Government that is characterised by complete accessibility - Cabinet and ministerial outreaches, community visits and the public days are held with the

coverage and frequency that is historically unmatched; allowing direct participation by the citizenry in policy formulation and decision-making, and direct feedback from the citizenry on programme implementation. In short, in keeping with Article 13, which has been given practical meaning and effect by this Government, stakeholder involvement and inclusiveness are at a historically unprecedented level in this country, and would compare favourably with any of our sister countries in the Caribbean.

I now turn to the issue of accountability and transparency in Government. In so doing I will respond to some of the issues including those raised by the Hon. Member Mr. Murray in his presentation when he asked about performance information, “What are we achieving?” And the observation made by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition on the question of whether allocations provided are reasonable to advance the circumstances of the people of our country.

Our Government, and I will state it again for emphasis, our Government, places the highest level of priority on accountability. By this, I refer to both financial accountability and accountability for performance. Much has already been said by my colleagues on what has been achieved with respect to financial accountability thus far, and on the additional steps that we will be taken as a Government to make further advances on this front. I wish to focus on the broader interpretation of accountability, and specifically on accountability to our citizens and issues related to performance measurement, provision of information, availability of information on Government’s programmes, etc.

For first time in our country's history, this Government has articulated detailed sector strategies for all of our main sectors, including health and education, which include observable, measurable, quantifiable targets. They are publicly available on the internet. The National Health Strategy, and the National Education Strategy and others are publicly available.

Instead of perusing these documents and coming to this House, having received the benefit of a careful read of these documents, the Government was regaled with spurious arguments about body parts and such trivialities, instead of discussing the important plans, strategies, and objectives that are articulated in these documents. Those documents were not important to the Opposition. What were important were the fairy tales and fantasies, and anecdotes like who carried home body parts, etc.

These strategies outlined specific targets, to which each sector is aiming. For example in the case of the health sector, the Government has targets on the life expectancy, the Government has targets on maternal and infant mortality, disease prevalence, H.I.V. prevalence, tuberculosis prevalence, malaria prevalence, etc. In like manner, our Government's education strategy outlines a number of goals and objectives, quantifiable goals - student attendance, pass rates, dropout rates, etc. In addition, both of the documents are supported by detailed statistics that this Government has made available. I have, for example, a 204-page Statistics Bulletin made available by the Ministry of Health. Ministry of Health Statistics Bulletin made publicly available, outlining a plethora, a veritable encyclopaedia, of statistics. [Mr. Carberry: How come they are not tabled here? How come they do not come here?] They are publicly available on the internet. They are available for entire country to see. For the first in our country's history, detailed performance information is available for all and sundry to see what is being achieved.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at the education statistics: Class size, dropout rate, admission rate, number of teachers, student-teacher ratio by education district - detailed statistics; but the Opposition does not wish to avail itself of such information. If it wishes to be faithful to the people whom it claims and purports to represent, it is this kind of information that would form the basis for meaningful debate. Not spurious and fanciful claims such as those that the Government has been regaled with over the past several days. I only referred to health and education. But for every sector - Forestry Sector Information Report, July 2009, detailed performance; Rice Sector Annual Report, Rice Research Report, detailed documents available on the internet. But the Opposition is not interested in this. It is interested in fanciful claims.

Moving swiftly on to the subject of international indices and data, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition Mr. Corbin cited some data, which I will say frankly, are completely erroneous. I would be happy to sit with the Leader of the Opposition and share with him accurate data. I do not know what were the sources that he was using.

Let us take some specific examples. The United Nations Human Development Index, Guyana's rank in the 2009 Human Development Index is 114th out of 182 countries - a position that places it among countries with medium human development. On the rankings Guyana places above such countries as Guatemala, Haiti, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, India, and Pakistan, Kenya, Ghana, Lesotho, Nigeria, etc. But if one looks beyond the

aggregate indicator to this sub indices, and even more interesting picture emerges. In the area of education on the indicator for Combined Gross Enrolment, Guyana places 45th out of the countries on the data lists, above such countries as the Czech Republic and Switzerland.

On the Human Poverty Index, an indicator that measures severe deprivation, Guyana places 48th above such countries as Bolivia, Honduras, Guatemala and Paraguay. On the Percentage of People Not Using an Improved Source of Water, Guyana places 54th, above Columbia and South Africa. On Children Underweight for Their Age, Guyana places 73rd above Saint Lucia and Saudi Arabia. On Gender Empowerment, Guyana places 53rd, above such countries as Belize, Bolivia, Honduras, Suriname, Colombia, Chile, Japan, Korea and Russia.

In the Global Competitiveness Report, produced by the World Economic Forum, Guyana places 104th out of 133 countries ranked. What is particularly striking about the Global Competitiveness Report is that in moving to the position of 104th from our previous position of 115th, Guyana climbed some 11 places. What is significant about that? Of all of the countries included in the database only six countries climbed to more than 11 places than Guyana climbed. In other words, Guyana was the seventh fastest ascending country in the entire ranking. This is publicly available.

On the World Bank Doing Business Guide, Guyana is ranked 101th, out of 183 countries, above Greece, Brazil and Suriname. On the sub indices: on the Ease of Starting a Business, Guyana is ranked 97th above Paraguay, Austria, Brazil, Spain, and even China. On dealing with Construction Permits and the Ease of Accessing Construction Permits, it is ranked 39th above Finland, Spain, Norway and Trinidad and Tobago. On Registering Property, Guyana is ranked 72nd above China, St. Lucia, Ireland, Kuwait and Mexico. On Protecting Investors, Guyana is ranked 73rd above Germany, Qatar, Spain, the Netherlands and Greece. On Enforcing Contracts, it is ranked 75th, above Mexico, Greece, Brazil, Peru, the Bahamas and many others.

The point I make is that the Opposition has a peculiar habit of selecting particular statistics that it knows to be distorted or untrue and conveniently ignoring others. I hasten to emphasise that as the Government has always said, and as I said in my budget speech, it does not consider this work to be complete. We are not where we would like as a Government for our country to be. But we are firmly convinced to continuing the work to take our country to that destination to which we all aspire. The point I make is that we have already made considerable progress in the right direction.

I turn to the issue of macroeconomic performance. From time to time, during the debate the question was asked, "Is our current rate of growth adequate?" With the clear insinuation by the Opposition being that the Government is growing more slowly than it should. Such an observation will only be made by one who is totally out of touch with reality. I would say that in the Opposition characterising of the Government's macroeconomic performance, including that by the Hon Leader of the Opposition, it is hopelessly out of touch with reality. I will simply cite from the *International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook*, October 2009, which is the most recent issue, page 176, Table A4. This is a table that addresses real growth in the emerging and developing economies of the Western Hemisphere - all 32 of them. What does this table say? It says of that for the period 1991 to 2000, Guyana, with an average growth rate of 4.9%, was the sixth fastest growing economy among the 32 emerging and developing countries.

Let us fast-forward to 2009. What does this table say? It says that in 2009 Guyana was the second fastest growing economy among the thirty-two emerging and developing economies of the Western Hemisphere after Bolivia. What does it say us about projections for 2010? These are the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.) projections. Its growth rate in fact is somewhat more modest than the one that Government has projected, marginally more modest. What does this table say about 2010? That in 2010, Guyana will continue to be the second fastest growing economy amongst the thirty-two emerging and developing countries, after Peru. These are the I.M.F. projections. They are publicly available, but the Opposition does not want to engage us in debate on statistics such as those. Instead, it wants to come with anecdotal and spurious accounts, and believes that by repeating them frequently they will somehow become the truth. Let me say that no matter how frequently these anecdotal and speculative accounts are repeated by the Opposition, no matter how frequently they are repeated, the facts will not be changed.

How can the macroeconomic performance of Guyana be challenged in times such as these? What is happening in the rest of our Region? A sister CARICOM country, I will not name the country, but I think many of us will know which country I am referring to. **[Mr. Ramjattan:** You are comparing chalk to cheese.] You like to compare with other countries conveniently. Let us examine what is happening in sister CARICOM countries - wage freeze; the Prime Minister offering to cut his salary and asking members of his Hon. House to follow his lead; necessary interventions in that context, and I commend the leaders

of that country for taking the necessary initiatives to address the challenges that they are facing.

Let us examine what the I.M.F. most recently said about the Bahamas, and I quote,

"Since May 2008, a global downturn has significantly affected economic activity in the Bahamas".

What did the I.M.F. say about Barbados?

"Executive Directors noted that Barbados is facing a severe economic recession. Output is contracting."

What did the I.M.F. say about Jamaica?

"Jamaica has been strongly impacted by the global economic slowdown. During the current fiscal year, real G.D.P. contracted further."

What did the I.M.F. say about Saint Lucia?

"The global economic slowdown has strongly affected tourism activity in the Region. The impact in St. Lucia has been considerable."

What did the IMF say about Guyana?

"Despite external shocks and the social pressures, macroeconomic stability was preserved.

- Directors commended the authority's commitment to further entrench macroeconomic stability, further strengthen the financial system and implement structural reforms.
- Directors observed that direct spillovers from the global financial crisis on the banking system have so far been limited.
- Directors welcome the authority's commitment to sustain the fiscal consolidation efforts.
- Directors welcome the progress made in the area of fiscal reforms.
- Directors welcome the plans to reduce the external current accounts deficit gradually over the medium term."

These are not the words of this Government. They are the words of an independent international agency having critically examined Government's economic policies, having confirmed the prudence of those policies, having added its own endorsement to the prudence of those policies, and to what the Government has been saying. These are not the words of the P.P.P./Civic, or of the Minister of Finance, or of the President.

Let us turn to the issue of vision. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition and many occasions spoke of vision. The Government has frequently articulated this vision. I will not repeat it. It is repeated in a multitude of speeches - our Party Manifesto, the presidential address at the opening of this Parliament, the presidential address at the start of the new year, and other documents. The Opposition has during the course of this debate sought to somehow make the nexus that the Government's vision or lack thereof, as it would like to say, and its policies do not lay the foundation for job creation and growth. It has made this statement and assertion during the course of this debate. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Corbin said perhaps the Government is living in another world. Well, I wish to use not the Government's words, not on this occasion the I.M.F. words, or an international agency's words, the words of other Guyanese to speak about what has been happening in this country and to make the point that in fact those who are living in another world must be the Opposition. What are these words?

Let us address the issue of investment and growth, and I have quotations... I am told that I have a very rigid time frame and I will be guided by your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No, no, Hon. Member, the Members on the Government side can give you a long time as you want. All they have to do is to move a motion and pass it.

Dr. Singh: I will endeavour to be as brief as I possibly can, so I will not quote in detail. I will merely cite a few headlines selected from the newspaper. Typically, it is the *Stabroek News*. I will merely cite a few headlines selected from 2009. I have some nice quotations highlighted, but I will be unable to do so in view of the lateness of the hour.

Stabroek News, Friday, January 23, 2009, "Sod Turned for \$700M NBS head office"; Stabroek News, Friday, April 10, 2009, "GBTI registers \$940m after tax profit"; Stabroek News, August, 28,2009, "Sod turned for \$400M Republic Diamond Branch"; Stabroek News, Friday, August 28,2009, "Republic Bank moves to new \$348M branch in Anna Regina"; Stabroek News, Friday, November 27, 2009, "Republic Bank nets \$1.8 B after-tax profits" , at a time when banks all around the world are on their knees. What world are they

living in? What world is the Opposition living in? Republic Bank's profits rose by 17 per cent; Demerara Bank registers \$818 million after-tax Profits; Citizen Bank made \$390 million profit in 2009; Scotia unveils small business suite . These are relatively recent, and I had the pleasure in participating in those programmes. But it is not only the financial sector.

Let us turn to agriculture. Tilapia Hatchery Commissioned.

Let us turn to manufacturing. Banks DIH after-tax profit Tops \$1 billion; DDL registers \$789 million profit; "DDL launches US\$9M bottling plant", *Stabroek News, Thursday, October 29, 2009*; New Fibre-optic cable will put country on brink of ICT breakthrough; Digicel inaugurates new headquarters.

8.16 p.m.

New Thriving opening new restaurant today, services sector. "Pegasus upgrade, remodelling to take place over next few years", *Stabroek News, Wednesday, May 27, 2009*; "Princess US\$2 M casino plans moving ahead", *Monday, July 27, 2009*; "Mario's Pizza set to open", *Stabroek News, Thursday, November 24, 2009*; Sol unveiled first branded station at Ramsburg ; Sol commissioned new service station at Corriverton; Alphonso building \$400 million complex at Charity. I could go on.

Does this sound like an economy that is not attracting investments? I think not! So I urge the Opposition to raise its head out of the proverbial sand and stop being as out of touch with reality as it evidently is.

Let us turn to the issue of policy continuity and predictability. The Opposition had much to say that "the budget has nothing new". This was like catchphrase, and "that the budget had nothing for the people." I will not deal with the matter of the budget having nothing for the people, because my honourable colleagues on this side of the House - Minister Priya Manickchand for example has already debunked that, Minister Rohee and Hon. Member Mr. Donald Ramotar have already debunked that notion that "the budget has nothing for the people." They have listed what the budget has for the people.

Let us address this matter about the budget is having "nothing new." I will come back now to my assessment at the start of the Opposition's presentations, that it is stuck in the past and backward looking. For the Government to examine why it is that the Opposition says "the budget has nothing new", we have to take a little lesson in history. I use the word lesson, I

was reluctant to use the word ‘lesson’, but the Hon. Member Mr. Carberry somewhat pompously said he was going to give us a lesson. So I am going to give him a history lesson.

Mr. Speaker: Before doing so, you need an extension of time Hon. Member.

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

Question put, and agreed to.

Dr. Singh: The reason why Members of the Opposition offered an instinctive response that “the budget has nothing new” to offer would be clear if we were to take a walk down memory lane. Let us take a walk down memory lane. I read Budget 2010 on the 8th of February 2010. Let us go back exactly twenty –one years to the 8th February, 1989, and read what *Stabroek News* had to say – budget time. It is important that we do this so that we understand why it says it has nothing new. Its budget had a lot that was new. 8th February 1989, the headline of the *Stabroek News*, “Panic Buying”. Let us read what this article says. I quote from the article:

“Several supermarkets have reported that items like sugar, salt, soap, meat and other items have had a heavier demand during the last few days. There were also high increases in the sales of water containers, mostly buckets and plastic basins. The National Paint Company which is a big supplier of empty drums does not have any in stock. There is no rice, flour, salt or even sugar in most supermarkets. The promise by the Guyana Rice Milling and Marketing Authority, that rice supplies will return to normal by the end of last month has not materialised. Geddes Grant Ltd. which had long flour lines during the last few days now has a large sign with the words ‘no flour’. Most supermarkets have found it necessary to post ‘no flour’ and ‘no rice’ signs. The irregular supplies of gasoline at service stations have thrown the transport system into confusion.”

Mr. Speaker, in case you want to see what the confusion had looked like, you have only to turn to February 15th 1989. Here is a picture: “gas short and taxi fares tripled” and you have a picture of chaos at the gas station in Region No. 3. I say this, because this is 1989, the much touted E.R.P. was being unrolled. The Opposition likes to speak about the E.R.P. as having saved the people. Is this how it saved the people? Let me read the caption under the picture.

“Vehicles owners and drivers again experience difficulty in obtaining fuel.”

That is one picture.

Let us examine the philosophical approach of the Party led by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition while it was in Government.

Investment and infrastructure: The Leader of the Opposition likes to speak about his Party policy as it relates to infrastructure and its lofty plans. *Stabroek News*, 4th February, 1989.

“Third G.E.C. boiler on last legs, country faces national emergency.”

“Price height across the Board soars”

After two and a half years of implementation of this much touted E.R.P., let us examine what was the state of our country. 1991, after two and a half years - of this E.R.P. that the Opposition has tried to rewrite history and to tell us the E.R.P. saved the country - of implementation, I have only to quote from our late President Dr. Cheddi Jagan.

“Dr. Cheddi Jagan calls budget a scud missile.”

Stabroek News, February 24, 1991. Why did he call it a scud missile? I will love to read the entire article, but I will quote only a paragraph.

“The sweeping further devaluation of the Guyana Dollar from 45-1 to 101 dollars and 75 cents against the US Dollar is impacting severely on consumers.”

A scud missile!

If you want to say, that Dr. Jagan’s comment was a political assessment, let us see what the stakeholders had to say. *Stabroek News*, March 3, 1991, “Budget will depress living standards”, says F.U.T.U.G. *Stabroek News*, March 24, 1991, T.U.C. says:

“Students attending the University of Guyana are finding it hard to continue studies, because transportation costs have shot up and doubled since Government presented the Budget.”

The president of the Berbice Chamber of Commerce said:

“Budget is prescription for economic demise”.

Let us say that they were stakeholders' groups. [Mr. Williams: What did the P.P.P. say?] I just told you what Dr. Jagan had said. Dr. Jagan had said "scud missile".

Let us examine what the man in the street had to say. I would not name the man in the street, but I am reading from the *Stabroek News*, February 26, 1991. What did man number one say: "The budget is a rough one." What did woman number one say: "The budget is a terrible one". What did man number two say: "I am still wondering to know what was going through the mind of the Minister of Finance when he outlined the stiff austerity measures last Wednesday". What did woman number two say: "The budget is killing us". When the Members on that side say that "the budget has nothing new", the Government does not want its budget to have anything new like that.

The Opposition likes to say that the E.R.P. saved Guyana. That is the E.R.P! That is what the E.R.P. did to our country. The first budget presented by this Government upon entering office, in 1993, an immediate shift in approach. *March, Friday 12, 1993*, "Heavy social service emphasis likely in today's budget". *January 17, 1993*, "Lavish spending to be slashed". [Mr. Corbin: How was that now? Was it Mr. Jadgeo?] I am quoting from Asgar Alli, the former Minister of Finance. [Mr. Ramjattan: How much Ministries do you have?] I know that you want to close some and send people home. You have said it since last year. Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is heckling me about how many Ministries the Government has. I want to remind this House that it is that Party which said it will close Ministries and send people home. I want the people of this country to be reminded of that, including the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. It is the Alliance For Change (A.F.C.) which said that. [Interruption] The list goes on.

I could give for example, Demerara Harbour Bridge collapsing... [Mr. Ramjattan: That is lavish spending.] I am coming to lavish spending just now. I could speak, a rough crossing; food, fuel in short supply in wake of the collapse of Demerara Harbour Bridge, in the river. "Harbour Bridge has fallen down and created chaos..."

This is what the Government inherited. These roads in Georgetown were a threat to citizen's lives and limbs.

Attitude to the social sector: *Stabroek News*, May 15, 1987 - it is important that we have a perspective of these things - "Housing in Guyana".

“The Ministry of Manpower and Housing falls under the aegis of the Office of the Prime Minister. There has been no official housing development of any kind for many years and no capital expenditure has been approved for the Ministry of Housing in the last three years.”

I am only quoting from *Stabroek News*.

“In fact the Ministry itself is barely surviving on a meagre current expenditure subvention of \$3.7 million voted primarily to paying salaries and allowances, purchasing office stock and doing minimal maintenance work on Government owned housing apartments. The Ministry is ill-prepared in both a structural and staffing sense to undertake a housing programme in the immediate future and so it is presently undergoing reorganisation.”

The list goes on; no housing programme. Today the Government’s track record as it relates to housing development and making available and accessible to the people of this country is there for all to see. So I make the point, and I take the walk down memory lane to make the observation first of all that the Government has what it calls policy continuity and consistency - no surprises, predictability. The absence of unpredictability is the source of the greatest risk. The Government has predictability. Today there is no second guessing. There is no need to hoard. There is no need to plan when the Government does what it has to do, because there are policy predictability and stability in our country. This has been a cardinal feature of our Government’s policymaking function throughout.

I wish to now turn to the issue of prudence in Government. A distinguishing hallmark of our Government has been prudence in the execution of our activities. To illustrate this point, I will select an example which is topical. Before I do so I turn to my friend and brother the Hon. Member Trotman and I will say that while Members were treated to lofty words in his presentation, I will urge that he heeds the words that “we will be better judged by our deeds than by our words”. I do not believe it is good enough to come in this House and to say “we want a new engagement”, “we want a new spirit of cooperation” and “we want a new level of discourse”. It is not enough to come and make a lofty speech in this House when it is not practised in our day to day activities.

Mr. Speaker: You time is up Hon. Member.

Mr. Hinds: I move that the Hon. Minister be granted another 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

Mr. Singh: I say to this Hon. House that if we were to illustrate the issue of prudence in Government there would be no better example than the example of Government expenditure. I see the Hon. Member is leaving. I hope the Hon. Member Mr. Trotman does not leave. I will select the example of Government expenditure on overseas travel.

We have noted certain statements made by the A.F.C., that this Government has spent \$1 billion on presidential travel. Let us examine what the facts are. I have already made a public statement on this matter. But let us examine to illustrate prudence in our Government's history of expenditure on overseas travel. In 2009 this administration spent \$218 million on overseas travel - the entire Government. This compares with, for illustrative purposes, total expenditure of \$3 billion on drugs and medical supplies for our health system - \$218 million against \$3 billion. It compares with a Guyana Defence Force (G.D.F.) capital budget of \$540 million - \$218 million versus 540 million.

Let us examine what budget 1992 proposed. Budget 1992 proposed \$140 million, remember, not adjusted for the time value of money, in nominal terms. Let us compare to that \$140 million, what was the budget for drugs and medical supplies for the entire health care system? It was \$126 million. What was the budget for G.D.F. capital expenditure? It was a shameless and measly \$7 million.

With all of the passage of time, our Government has continued to contain the level of expenditure on overseas travel, so that the nominal expenditure that it incurs is marginally over what was being incurred nearly twenty years ago.

Why was this the case? Let me illustrate. I will cite an example I believe should be familiar to all of the Members of this House, including Mr. Trotman who is now operating the camera on his telephone. In 2002, Guyana attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Australia. If I am not mistaken it was in Melbourne, Australia. What was its delegation to that meeting? Its delegation comprised His Excellency the President, its Foreign Affairs Minister, its Political Adviser to the President, Mr. Kellawan Lall, who is now Minister of Local Government, its High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Mr. Lall Singh and Dr. Katherine Monk who was at the time Director General of Iwokrama - a grand total of five persons.

Let us go back to the last time that the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting was held in Australia. This would have been in 1981. What was the composition of Guyana's delegation in 1981, under the P.N.C.'s administration, to the Commonwealth Heads of Government? The President and First Lady, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Attorney General and his wife, Minister of Health and his wife, the Head of the Presidential Secretariat (H.P.S.), the Confidential Secretary to the President, the Assistant of the Confidential Secretary to the President, an Adviser to the President, the Chief Political Adviser, an Assistant Economic Adviser, one Political Assistant, the High Commissioner to London, two Officers from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, two Presidential Assistants, the Aide-de-camp (A.D.C.) to the President, six Staff Officers, four media teams and one other staff of our permanent mission in New York – thirty-one! I should have added that when the Government's delegation went to Melbourne it went in a commercial flight. To fit these thirty-one people, the grand total of US\$270,000 was spent to charter an aircraft. I did not mention the fourteen crew members who also had to be accommodated in Australia.

This was a pattern of behaviour. Let us go to the 1975 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Jamaica. The delegation comprised the Prime Minister and his wife, the Foreign Affairs Minister and his wife, Minister of Finance and his wife, Minister of Agriculture and his wife, Minister of State within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and umpteen others including seventeen persons to deliver a cultural performance. There were forty-four persons in total. So, I believe that the Hon. Member Mr. Trotman is well aware of these facts. I also believe that he is an honourable man. He should know the prudence with which the Government manages its affairs. If he wishes to have this new kind of engagement, the most effective way to have this achieved or to contribute to the achievement of this, is not to come with a lofty statement in this National Assembly, but to correct the misrepresentations that are being peddled outside the National Assembly. On the matter of prudence, I say again, our Government track record withstands scrutiny.

I could, if I wish, continue to dismantle and debunk every single argument offered by the Opposition, but I do not think there is need. In the final analysis, if the Opposition wishes to denude its contributions to these budget debates, year after year, of any semblance of objectivity, but instead to infuse and suffocate the debate with blinkered and unfettered partisan politics, then there will remain simply two questions to be asked of this House, and of all Guyanese, by those of us on this side. The first would be, "Were we better off as a country in 1992, when the P.N.C. surrendered power, than we were in 1964?" I have no

doubt that the answer, even from those on that side of House, would be a resounding no! The second question would be, “Are we better off in 2010 than we were in 1992 when the P.P.P./Civic took office?” I have equally no doubt that the answer will be a resounding yes!, even from those on that side of the House.

On that note I could rest my case. But I will not rest my case just as yet, instead I will elaborate briefly why I consider this journey into history to be necessary. I do for a few particular and especial reasons. Firstly, because as a county we must never forget our history nor must we be unaware of the sordid place from which we have come. Only then will we fully appreciate the fullness of the distance we have travelled and the value of the circumstances of which we now find ourselves.

Secondly, as a means through which to urge the Opposition to remove, as I said earlier, its heads from the proverbial sand, to acknowledge the progress that is being made and visibly so, to desist from the practice of the politics of distortion and deception for which its seem to have a proclivity and instead to engage the Government in the future in meaningful and sincere debates on how it can deepen widen and accelerate development in our country.

Our Government has undertaken to build a modern and prosperous Guyana notwithstanding the vast progress that has been made to this end. This work is still in progress. I say this without fear of contradiction, that the progress of this work will be considerably aided if all Guyanese would add their bit to this effort, the political Opposition included.

Budget 2010 outlines a comprehensive agenda of programmes and projects aimed to advance this world, to grow our economy, to develop our country and to improve the lives of all of our people. On the eve of our Republic’s 40th anniversary I call on the Opposition to join the Government and to work together with it in accelerating its progress towards achieving a modern and prosperous Guyana.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to commend Budget 2010 to this House. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this completes the general debate on this Budget. Before we adjourn we will consider and dispose of the Business Sub-Committee, Committee of Supply on the allocation of time for the consideration of the 2010 Estimates of Expenditure by the Committee of Supply. We will have to go into Committee of Supply for this purpose. The Assembly will, therefore, now resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members I wish to report that the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply met today 22nd February, 2010 and considered the allocation of time for the consideration of the 2010 Estimates of Expenditure in the Committee of Supply. The Sub-Committee passed a resolution on the matter. Copies of the Sub-Committee's Minutes, Resolution and Schedule have been circulated. Will the Hon. Member of Finance kindly move the necessary motion?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I now move

“That the Committee of Supply doth agree with the Business Sub-Committee in its Resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members the Committee of Supply has been allocated three days for the consideration of the Estimates. Consideration will begin Wednesday, 24th February, 2010 and will be in accordance with the resolution of the Sub-Committee. Let the Assembly resume please.

Assembly resumed

Mr. Speaker: Before we take the adjournment, Hon. Prime Minister, I will like to take this opportunity to wish yourself and your family, Members of the Government side of the bench, Hon. Member Mr. Corbin and his family, and Members of the Opposition a happy Republic day, and to wish Guyana well.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker I also wish to take this opportunity to extend happy Republic Anniversary greetings to yourself and to all the Members of this House, on both sides, and to have this House adjourned until Wednesday at 2.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Members, the House is adjourned until Wednesday at 2.00 p.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 8.45 p.m.