

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

119TH Sitting

Friday, 26TH February, 2010

The Assembly convened at 2.06 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC 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*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2010.

Assembly resolved itself in Committee of Supply

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: We will proceed in the usual manner. We start today with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Agency: 51 Ministry of Home Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 511 – Secretariat Services - \$213,622,000

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. This first question relates to Staffing Details but if I can get a general answer from the Minister, it may facilitate easy progress. These are line items 6111-6117, could the Hon. Minister say if the figures under the year 2010 are the figures that he anticipates, or are they actually filled as at today’s date?

Mr. Rohee: Those positions are actually filled. Is that to her satisfaction?

Mrs. Backer: It is good to see the Minister is smiling. It is not something that we see too often. Now that we know that, if I can go to line item 6116 – Contracted Employees, there is a hundred per cent increase in the figures between 2009 and 2010. My question to the Hon. Minister is could he state for us the highest paid position that a contracted employee holds, both in terms of position and salary?

Mr. Rohee: The highest paid position is the Permanent Secretary (P.S), and it is within the range of about \$400,000. If the Member needs to have it more precise in terms of dollars, it is \$463,000.63.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister say who is the lowest paid person, not in terms of name, the position and salary, of fifty-seven contracted employees?

Mr. Rohee: That would be the cleaner.

Mrs. Backer: For line item 6243, I see a reduction - it is not a big figure - in janitorial and cleaning supplies. Is this as a result of inter-agency bulk buying? Because it is very strange to see the Ministry janitorial and cleaning supplies are going down, when it is known that those figures are going up in the market. Or is it that it was too high previously and it is now settled at its correct figure.

Mr. Rohee: I am advised that it has nothing to do with inter-agency buying. It has precisely to do with the allocation that was made to the Ministry.

Mrs. Backer: The Ministry budgeted \$672,000 last year, and it spent \$930,000. What led the Ministry to believe that it can come in with a figure that is \$214,000 less this year? That is why I thought it was bulk buying.

Mr. Rohee: If this money obviously is not enough - hopefully, the Ministry will try to stretch it to get value for money. Then obviously either the Ministry vires or comes for supplementary.

Mrs. Backer: This may be an unfair question to the Minister, but he is the only person who is here to answer these questions. Line item 6263 – Postage, Telex and Cablegrams: Would he, either directly or by implication, through the Hon. Minister of Finance, agree that telexes and cablegrams are no longer sent, and would it not, perhaps, be a good idea that next year this line

item be renamed? **[Prime Minister:** There is email]. Well, it is not a cablegram. Nobody sends cablegrams and telexes anymore. I am asking a question, which is would the Minister not agree with me?

Mr. Rohee: I think the explanation is quite straightforward. The Ministry still has to mail letters internally and externally, and it also has to send some documents, from time to time, by Fedex or other means. **[Member:** You can change the name.] Well, that is outside of my purview – changing those things.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6294 – Other: This is a fairly large sum of \$24,277,000 and the total operating line item there is \$26,463,000, and the Other is \$24.4 million of that amount. Could the Hon. Minister share with this National Assembly what are the expenses under other?

Mr. Rohee: Just to be very clear on this one, this has to do with Community Policing.

Mrs. Backer: Is the Minister saying that \$24,277,000, under line item 6294, is anticipated to be used by the Community Policing Service?

Mr. Rohee: No, it is for Community Policing activities and operations, etc. Is it too small?

Mrs. Backer: It is ridiculous; it should not be there at all. Would the Hon. Minister not agree with me that Community Policing Service would be better served if it was under the control of the Commissioner of Police, rather than himself, as was recommended by various experts and documents that the Government has embraced?

Mr. Rohee: This has been a perennial question that Hon. Member, Mrs. Backer, has been raising. I think at the level of policy, a decision has been arrived at that there are certain aspects of the Community Policing activities which fall to the Guyana Police Force (G.P.F.), given the fact that a number of members of the Community Policing Services are Rural Constables (R.C.s) and therefore fall under the Police Act. There are a number of members of Community Policing Service who are not R.C.s but civilians and, therefore, fall under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Ministry works quite closely with the Police on Community Policing Service and it has never had any issues of divergence but rather more of convergence.

Mrs. Backer: Would the Minister not agree that the role of any subject Minister is one more of policy, projection and quantity control, rather than the hands-on control of any entity?

Mr. Rohee: I do not know what it is the Hon. Member is referring to, but if it is that she is implying that there are some political control and hands- on approach in respect of Community Policing Service, I do not see a difficulty with the approach being hands-on. A Minister has to be hands- on when dealing with any matter under his ministerial portfolio, and I am sure that the two former Ministers over there would agree with me.

On the question of control, however, I think I have already explained that R.C.s in the Community Policing Service activities fall under the Commissioner of Police, who has command and control of the Police Force, whereas, civilians who are associated with Community Policing Service, are associated with the Ministry of Home Affairs. To cut a long story short, Mr. Chairman, I would not want the Hon. Member to harbour any illusions that that kind of situation to which the Member is referring obtains.

Mr. Chairman: I will cut a long story short and not permit any debate on policy matters. We are dealing with the estimates; we have gotten trapped yesterday into a long debate about a canal somewhere or the other, so I am not going to allow that again. We are dealing with the estimates, Hon. Members. Please stick to that.

Mrs. Backer: Yes, Mr. Chairman, before I leave, I must ask a direct question, and it is not about policy.

Mr. Chairman: You can ask any direct question on the estimates. That is permissible.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister share with the House who has day to day control of the Community Policing Groups in Guyana? That is not policy.

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, with due respect, I think we are bordering here on a question of policy again. That is a matter of policy.

Mrs. Backer: I think the Hon. Minister has answered my question by saying, in fact, that he is.

Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: When we turn to page 391, for the National Commission on Law and Order, a total of \$23,900,000. Could I respectfully

ask the Minister how much of that \$23,900,000 is budgeted for stipends for members of the Commission?

Mr. Rohee: I do not have that figure right now, but it could be given to the Member subsequently.

Mrs. Backer: Would the Minister share with this House, how many members are officially on the National Commission on Law and Order?

Mr. Rohee: I think the Hon. Member, herself, who is a member of the National Commission on Law and Order, knows how many members are officially associated with the Commission. I do not have that figure here with me, but I could provide it.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister, for the benefit of the National Assembly and the nation, indicate who chairs the National Commission on Law and Order?

Mr. Rohee: I think the Hon. Member knows that whenever she comes to meetings of the National Commission on Law and Order, the Hon. Minister chairs the meetings of the Commission.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the National Assembly what is the monthly stipend for members of the National Commission on Law and Order?

Mr. Rohee: The member knows that she receives \$5, 000.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence, I do not think it is fair for the Minister to be prefacing answers that I know. I am not asking as Deborah Backer, if I was asking as Deborah Backer, I would not be here. But I am Deborah Backer of the People's National Congress Reform 1-Guyana, Member of Parliament, and it is in that capacity that I am asking a question. This is not an informal chat. I will ask the Hon. Minister another question, and I hope that he will answer it in a general way. I did not ask him, could the Minister tell Members that he is the Chair? I know he is the Chair, but that is not the issue. Could the Hon. Minister please indicate whether he agrees with me that the policy of the National Commission on Law and Order is that if a member does not attend a meeting, he or she is not paid a stipend for that month?

Mr. Chairman: Where exactly is that in the estimates, Hon. Member?

Mrs. Backer: At page 391, Sir, under Details of Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, Agency Code 51, National Commission on Law and Order - the budget is \$23,900,000. Mr. Chairman, if the Minister had been prepared and could say to me what percentage of the \$23,900,000 which goes to members, then I would not be here any longer at this line item.

Mr. Chairman: If you feel, Hon. Member, that this is a very important matter, as you obviously do, because you are spending...

Mrs. Backer: Sir, I did not hear that.

Mr. Chairman: You obviously feel that this is a very important matter and that ...

Mrs. Backer: I feel that on behalf of the people of Guyana, at least the people I represent ...

Mr. Chairman: Would you allow me, Hon. Member. You obviously feel that this is a very important matter and if you so feel...

Mrs. Backer: [Member: Sit]. I cannot sit if the Speaker is speaking to me. Sir, could you ask the Members not to be heckling?

Mr. Chairman: Proceed Hon. Member.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you Sir. I cannot sit if the Speaker is speaking to me I have to remain standing.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I will move on to the next item if you do not proceed with your question.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister say of the policy at the National Commission on Law and Order is that if a member does not attend meetings that member is not paid his/her stipend for that month?

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Chairman, if I may with your permission. I do not want to speculate, but to simply say that this allocation for the National Commission on Law and Order covers the stipend which the members receive on attendance at meetings. In addition to that, the National

Commission on Law and Order also expends money for outreach meetings that are held throughout the year. That is how the money is used.

Mrs. Backer: This is my last question on this line item. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this National Assembly how many outreach programmes are planned for this year for the National Commission on Law and Order?

Mr. Rohee: There is a programme of activities that was adopted at the last meeting of the National Commission on Law and Order. I think the Hon. Member has received a copy. In that document there are a number of outreach meetings that have been identified.

Programme 511 – Secretariat Services - \$213,622,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 512 – Guyana Police Force - \$4,777, 853, 000

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6223 – Office Materials and Supplies: There is an increase of just under hundred per cent – about ninety -plus per cent. Could the Hon. Minister share with the Assembly the reason for this increase?

Mr. Rohee: This increase caters for additional stationery and other materials related to print and non-print materials for the Guyana Police Force, given its expanded activities, and more activities which are associated with the G.P.F. as a result of the modernisation process.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, through you, at line item 6224, it is specific for print and non-print materials, so I find it a bit strange that the Minister in his answer as to the large increase indicated that it is because of an increase in print materials, because it is a separate line item. In fact, the very next line item. Could the Minister clarify that please?

Mr. Rohee: One has to do with expenses for stationeries and toners, and the other has to do with non-print materials.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6243 – Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies - it has gone up from \$12.195 million to \$15.272 million. Would the Minister be kind enough to indicate whether this figure includes cleaning supplies for the lock-ups in the various police stations?

Mr. Rohee: Most police stations have lock-ups. It is the police station as a whole that receives the benefits from this kind of allocation. If the police station does, then the lock-up which constitutes part of the police station would be included.

Mrs. Backer: It ought to be included.

Mr. Rohee: It would be.

Mrs. Backer: Sir, it is not really a recommit to, but I passed certain Staffing Details which are on the same page. Line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support: What category of policemen would be in that line item?

Mr. Rohee: That would be Constables and Corporals.

Mrs. Backer: During the year the Hon. Minister has lost, or we, because it is all of us, have lost one hundred and thirteen Constables and Corporals. Could I respectfully ask what is the optimum number of Constables and Corporals that should be to bring the police force to its full capacity? This is just to do with the Constables and Corporals – the established strength.

Mr. Rohee: I am advised that there is a shortage of about four hundred Constables and three hundred Corporals.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6116: I see it is a constant figure. Could the Minister share with the Assembly the positions and salaries of these four contracted employees?

Mr. Rohee: The persons are: Mr. Jameer who is the Officer in Charge (O.C.) at the Office of Professional Responsibility (O.P.R.) and receives \$203,588; Mr. Heeralall Mackhanlall, the second in charge at O.P.R. who receives \$203,588; Mr. Claude Whittaker who is the O.C. at the Public Relations Office (P.R.O.) receives the same salary, and Government Pathologist Dr. Nehaul Singh receives \$139,564.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I see that at line item 6111 there is a reduction of eighteen persons in the Administrative Staffing Details. Could the Minister for the benefit of the House indicate what category of policemen comprises this Administrative Staffing Details?

Mr. Rohee: This accounts for ranks from Cadet Officers to Deputy Commissioners.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6294 – Other, \$24,675,000: Could the Hon. Minister please share with this House what comes under that category?

Mr. Rohee: I am sure this one will interest the Hon. Member. It has to do with the handling and storage of dead bodies.

Mrs. Backer: Sir, is the Hon. Minister saying that the Ministry has budgeted \$24 million...? I hope my name is not on that list; I am getting a bit concerned. [Member: What list?]. The list from the Roger Khan's issue. Is the Hon. Minister saying that the Ministry has budgeted \$24,675,000 is allocated for the disposal, burial or recovery of corpses?

2.36 p.m.

Mr. Rohee: This covers dead bodies which are found on the road, or in bushes. They have to be picked up, transported and stored. The police do not have a mortuary and so it has to go to a private mortuary for storage, handling, and so forth. Those things cost money. One has to pay for both the living and the dead.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Minister share with this House how many bodies were covered last year when the Government had to spend \$27,299,000?

Mr. Rohee: That figure can eventually be provided to the Members. I can tell the Members that it is quite a number.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6302- Training (including Scholarship): Could the Hon. Minister share with the Assembly who will benefit from the training and whether this includes any overseas training? I should not say who should benefit; what is the nature of the training and whether it would all be done locally or if some training will be done overseas?

Mr. Rohee: Yes. That is true.

Mrs. Backer: What is true?

Mr. Rohee: It is true that training will be provided overseas. It is for provision of overseas and local training.

Mrs. Backer: That is why I amended my question and I asked what type of training. Is it going to be in the area forensic? Is it going to be in the area of fashion? The Assembly needs to know. My question is in what area of expertise will scholarships or training be done to enhance the Guyana Police Force?

Mr. Rohee: It is training which is security related. There are some details that the Ministry would not want to get into at this point in time. But there are some general and specific areas as well that is needed by the Guyana Police Force. The modernisation process that is now taking place in the Police Force requires extensive training to take place in many areas. This is what is happening.

Mr. Chairman: Intelligence gathering.

Programme 512-Guyana Police Force - \$4,777,853,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 513- Guyana Prison Service - \$877,773,000

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6114- Clerical and Office Support: There is a reduction of forty between 2009 and this year. Firstly, can the Minister share with this House what category of the Prison Officers fall under this line item?

Mr. Rohee: These are Assistant Prison Officers and Prison Officers.

Mrs. Backer: The Hon. Minister had indicated that these were positions that were actually filled as of today's date or at least when this was published. Could the Minister share with this Hon. House - there is a figure of one hundred and eighty in that category - whether it is the expectation of the Guyana Prison Service that it would be able to raise this figure of one hundred and eighty during this year? Are there plans to aggressively seek to do so?

Mr. Rohee: Advertisements were placed in the newspapers. Persons have applied, and processing of recruits is now taking place.

Mrs. Backer: Would the Hon. Minister be able to share with the House how many people applied?

Mr. Rohee: I recollect one hundred twenty, approximately.

Mrs. Backer: Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to share with the House what is the established strength in this category of clerical and office support in line item 6114?

Mr. Rohee: The number is two hundred and twenty-six. That is the established strength.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you. Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, line item 6116 - Contracted Employees, under Staffing Details, there are seven contracted employees for this year. Could the Hon. Minister please indicate the position of the highest contracted employee? Well it is only seven, could he quickly just tell the House, he does not have to worry so much with the salaries, but what are their positions? The Assembly is not particularly interested in the names either of the people.

Mr. Rohee: What is it the Hon. Member wanted to know? Could the Member please repeat?

Mrs. Backer: The positions of the contracted employees.

Mr. Rohee: The positions are two Welfare Officers, one Prison Officer, one Officer-in-Charge and one Chief Prisons Officer.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very. Turning to line item 6294 - Other: There is here a sum of \$15,967,000. Could the Hon. Minister share with the Assembly what is covered under this line item?

Mr. Rohee: This allocation has to do with provision of feed for the livestock.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Minister indicate to this National Assembly how many current prisoners are involved in agricultural activities within the prisons?

Mr. Rohee: The Ministry has not done an audit on that. The figure fluctuates depending on how the population decreases or increases. Sometimes it will take from amongst remand prisoners; sometimes it will take from amongst convicted prisoners at each location, particularly at Lusignan and Mazaruni. Those are where the emphasis is placed on the agricultural projects for the Guyana Prisons Service.

Mrs. Backer: Given that the Government has accepted that re-training and training of inmates are very important, which is commendable, would the Hon. Minister indicate if there is a systematic way that people who may have an interest in agriculture are identified or is it just an ad-hoc thing, the Ministry takes this one today, and tomorrow take that one? Or are there a group of prisoners who have been moulded so that when they come out they may come out with agricultural skills, rather than just taking them from amongst convicted prisoners or taking them from here and there?

Mr. Rohee: There is a Sentence Management Board as well as a Training Board in the Guyana Prisons Service which evaluates each prisoner on entry. Depending on the predisposition and the background of the prisoner then those determinations are made.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much Hon. Minister. Training (Including Scholarships) - \$17,192,000: Could the Hon. Minister say what areas of endeavour are people being sent to study, and whether it is just local or some are going to be sent or anyone is being sent overseas? What are the disciplines?

Mr. Rohee: I remember a couple of years ago the Hon. Member Mr. Murray asked if prisoners go for scholarships too, but the Government does not send prisoners on scholarships. The scholarships are usually awarded to the staff of the Guyana Prisons Service; issues pertaining to welfare, custodial management, all the disciplines that are associated with the conventional prison service and the disciplines that are associated with correctional services as well - both local and overseas trainings.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister be kind enough to share with this House when last someone has come back from overseas and what degree or diploma did that person hold that is now helping to enhance the prison?

Mr. Rohee: My recollection is that the Officer-in-Charge of Welfare, Training and Corrections, Rev. Clarke, recently came back from Japan from a training course. The Member did not pick up that one.

Mrs. Backer: Is that person one of the people on contract or is this a member of the established strength?

Mr. Rohee: I think I mentioned earlier that she is one of the contracted officers.

Mrs. Backer: Would the Minister be able to share with this Hon. House how long that contract is? Because Members want to make sure that if the Government spends money on training, the person does not disappear after his or her service in the next year or two. What are her terms?

Mr. Rohee: I think those contracts are year to year contracts. But I can assure the Hon. House that as a member of the Training Board and other Boards associated with the prison service, Rev. Clarke transfers that knowledge to members there. The fact that she has returned from overseas to Guyana is an indication that she wants to make a contribution.

Mrs. Backer: Training: I know that the Minister has said that Mr. Murray had asked a couple years ago about scholarships for prisoners, and he said it is not covered here, but Members are aware that some prisoners take Caribbean Examination Council (C.X.C) examinations while they are in prison. Would the Hon. Minister indicate whether that would be covered under that line item? In other words, would the prison pay for a prisoner to do C.X.C. examinations - the fees - or would that responsibility fall on the family?

Mr. Rohee: I would leave those matters mainly to the Training Board of the Prison Service to determine rather than it being determined by me at my level. But if it was a question of resources being made available there is a Prison Fund which is drawn mainly from contributions made by prisoners which takes care of that expense.

Programme 513 - Guyana Prison Service - \$877,773,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 514 - Police Complaints Authority - \$8,167,000

Programme 514 - Police Complaints Authority - \$8,167,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Programme: 515 - Guyana Fire Service - \$503,529,000

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6113 - Other Technical and Craft Skilled: It is here there has been a reduction of thirteen members - last year it was four hundred and two. First of all, would the

Hon. Minister share with the National Assembly what category of Firemen and Firewomen are covered under this line item? Also, what is the authorised strength?

Mr. Rohee: This is promotions. It reflects promotions within the Service - from Fireman to Sub-Officers.

Mrs. Backer: I asked under line item 6113, what category of Firemen and Firewomen are catered for under that line item 6113? What are the categories - the ranks? And the second question was what is the authorised strength of that line?

Mr. Rohee: The authorised strength is four hundred and two. The category or categories of Firemen, which is a category in the Fire Service, to Sub-officers, also another category.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6302 - Training (Including Scholarships): I notice that last year \$8.5 million was budgeted for but only \$4 million was spent. Would I be correct in saying that some of the training that was anticipated in 2009 did not realise and it is now being budgeted again in 2010?

Mr. Rohee: Yes. That is a true statement.

Mrs. Backer: Would the Hon. Minister share with this House the nature of the training that is contemplated during this year for the \$10 million?

Mr. Rohee: There are two categories. One has to do with advanced training with respect to the use of equipment and training also as firefighters.

Programme 515 - Guyana Fire Service - \$503,529,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 516 – General Register Offices - \$93,927,000

Mrs. Backer: The first one really is an observation. Line items 6273 - Water Charges and 6281 - Security Services: Usually, when one looks at all the other pages, the details, between line items 6273 and 6281 there is a sub-heading - Other Goods and Services Purchased. I am just drawing to the attention of the Hon. Minister of Finance that that head is missing, on page 209, between

line items 6273 and 6281. At least in my book it is missing. I just thought as a community service I would mention that to the Minister.

On line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: There is almost a one hundred per cent increase of contracted employees, from eighteen to thirty-five. Could the Hon. Minister indicate who are these new contracted employees? Who, not in terms of their names, but in terms of their designations, moving from eighteen to thirty-five?

Mr. Rohee: These would be transcribers and searchers.

Mrs. Backer: Would the Hon. Minister indicate, by and large, if the contracts for these employees are yearly contracts? It might not be every single one.

Mr. Rohee: I thought the Member almost said “buy a large.” Yes, they are yearly contracts.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6117 - Temporary Employees: Could the Hon. Minister say what are the four temporary employees that are still on the staff? I see there has been an effort which I am happy about to reduce it. But who are the four temporary employees?

Mr. Rohee: They are searchers and transcribers.

Mrs. Backer: These searchers and transcribers who have come on, were they there primarily to facilitate people leading up to registration? Or is it anticipated that they will be there next year and the next year? Or is this really just a one year and it is anticipated that they will go off?

Mr. Rohee: The Ministry had a certain number that was temporarily employed to reduce the backlog that had accumulated and it took them on permanently. There was another group that came on as permanent searchers and transcribers.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6284 - Other - a figure of \$5,310,000: Would the Hon. Minister share with the National Assembly what is catered for under this line item?

Mr. Rohee: I am advised that that has to do with payment of agency and registrar fees.

Mrs. Backer: Would the Minister amplify a bit, for the benefit of both myself, and the rest of the House, at least this side of the House, what exactly do agency fees mean?

Mr. Rohee: Well there are certain agencies that perform functions on behalf of the General Register Offices (G.R.O.), for example, the Post Office. The Ministry has to pay them for those services that they provide to the G.R.O. Education sometimes could be free.

Programme 516 - General Register Offices - \$93,927,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 511 - Secretariat Services - \$1,251, 541, 000

Mrs. Backer: Project 1208500 - Citizen Security, Project Profile Ref. 207, "Provision for Citizen Security Programme-I.D.B.": When we look at it, there are seven descriptions listed, including: "Design and construction of forensic lab." - is number six. My question is, has the site for this forensic lab been identified, and if so, when is work to begin, or if it has begun, when is it anticipated that it will be finished?

Mr. Rohee: Yes. The site has been identified. The contract has been awarded for the design of the building and negotiations have begun with the University authorities on the matter. It is anticipated that construction will start this year, and hopefully by the end of this year there will be the forensic lab structure in place.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much. Under the same project, Project Profile Ref. 207, the third description, "Strengthening social cohesion within communities": Could the Hon. Minister share with this National Assembly how much money is earmarked for that particular very important aspect of the Citizen Security programme for this year?

Mr. Rohee: This is the community action component of the Citizen Security programme. I do not have the precise figure which will be spent this year, but that can be provided subsequently.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, are we going now to the Guyana Police Force, or are we going to continue straight on?

Mr. Chairman: Sorry!

Mrs. Backer: Are you putting Programme 511 first and then we will go to Programme 512?

Mr. Chairman: As soon as you are finished.

Mrs. Backer: Yes, I am finished with Programme 511.

Programme 511- Secretariat Services - \$1,251,541,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 512 – Guyana Police Force - \$513,500,000

Mrs. Backer: Project 1200700 - Police Stations and Buildings - Project Profile Ref. 212, “Rehabilitation of police stations and quarters”: When Members look they see under description of projects, 2 and 3, fourteen buildings have been earmarked for work to be done. My respectful question is, if the Minister could share with us which one of these stations will be given priority or will they all be worked on at the same time? There are Leonora, Enachu, Baramita, etc. - eleven police stations.

3.06 p.m.

Mr. Rohee: To be truthful, the Ministry has not done any prioritisation. But it would seem to me that the pace with which these buildings would be rehabilitated would depend also on the location. Sometimes the police stations in the interior, depending on the contractor, would finish those rehabilitated works quickly, and the ones on the Coast would also be completed quickly as well.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister share with the National Assembly whether work has begun - this is a two-year project which began in January last year, and is scheduled to finish in December this year- on the eleven stations, if any of them has had substantial work done as we speak now because we have past the halfway mark?

Mr. Rohee: The Brickdam lockups...

Mrs. Backer: No, I am at description of projects, 2 and 3, not one.

Mr. Rohee: These rehabilitation works are at different stages of completion.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the Assembly - at the same Project Profile it says here, "Rehabilitation and extension to Brick dam lockups - Phase II – whether this is the final stage of this rehabilitation extension?"

Mr. Rohee: Well, the first phase has finished... [Mrs. Backer: I did not ask about that]. I am coming to that, just be patient. The Ministry intends to embark on a second phase which will see an additional set of cells being constructed. That has not started as yet.

Mrs. Backer: When is this phase expected to be concluded, and is this the final phase of the rehabilitation work?

Mr. Rohee: The first phase is almost finished.

Mrs. Backer: No, it is the second phase.

Mr. Rohee: The first phase is almost finished.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, I hope I will gain some time, or I will be able to reclaim some time, because I am asking the Minister a simple question. Is Phase II, as it is written here, the final phase of the rehabilitation to the Brickdam lockups? The second question is when this Phase II is expected to be completed? Is it Phase II the final phase?

Mr. Rohee: The answer is a little bit more complicated than that. If the Member wants an answer on whether Phase II is the final phase – yes. Phase II is the final phase, but it is not as straightforward as that.

Mrs. Backer: Moving to Project 2400400, Project Profile Ref. 213, "Purchase of vehicles, motorcycles, boats and outboard engines": My first question is, if the Minister could share what is the cost of the water cannon - the estimated cost of the water cannon that is listed there?

Mr. Rohee: It is approximately \$37 million.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this National Assembly what is the purpose of this water cannon? What is it going to do?

Mr. Rohee: It has to do with public order: maintaining public order in the streets, and to be used against demonstrators.

Mr. Chairman: Is only one, Hon. Minister, you are having? Would there be only one or more?

Mr. Rohee: One for the time being.

Mrs. Backer: What I was going to ask is how does the Minister anticipate that he will be able to fill this water cannon, how will he water it? That is not my concern. I have almost attempted to ask the Minister that if he does not agree with me that this will be a white elephant. I would not go in to that. [**Mr. Rohee:** That is good.]

I see under this same project boats and outboard engines to be purchased. With the acquisition of the boats and the outboard engines - well let us deal with the boats - could he share with this Assembly what will this take the fleet of operable boats to? The purchase of the boats this year will take the Police fleet to what princely figure?

Mr. Rohee: I do not want to mislead the Assembly, but that figure could be provided.

Mrs. Backer: Is the Minister saying that he is not aware of how many boats, serviceable boats, the Guyana Police Force has now? Is that what he is saying?

Mr. Rohee: I do not have the figure here.

Mrs. Backer: I am just asking, because it is the Minister who got up and said, quite rightly, that the threat of drug is Guyana's main problem, and everyone knows that drugs are coming along its rivers and its borders. I am surprised that the Minister would not have at his fingertip how many operable boats the Guyana Police Force has.

Mr. Rohee: Lest it be conveyed that I am not aware, I know where the boats are. I know which where boats are located, but I do not want to give a misrepresented number to this National Assembly.

Mrs. Backer: Would the Minister be prepared to give the Assembly an approximate figure. It does not want to know where they are, when they work, and where they get gasoline from to work. The Assembly does not want to know that. It wants to know approximately how many

operable boats are there to carry a fight of drugs against the drug lords in Guyana, and other smugglers.

Mr. Rohee: The answer to that is that the Police Force does not have enough. It needs more, and that is why it is budgeted to give it some more.

Mrs. Backer: The last one, this is Project Profile Ref. 215, which would be project 2600100 under the Programme: 512 - Guyana Police Force. There is a long list at Project Profile Ref. 215, but I just want to single out fingerprint and handwriting equipment, and to ask the Minister, how much money has been identified for fingerprint equipment, for not handwriting, sorry Sir, and forensic equipment under this project of \$207.5 million?

Mr. Rohee: For forensic equipment there is \$679, 000 and for fingerprinting- the Branch - is \$9.4 million.

Programme 512 – Guyana Police Force – \$513,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I will give you a few minutes more on Programmes: 513, 514, 515, and 516 even though the time is exhausted, but I would like to complete them.

Programme: 513 –Guyana Prison Services – \$104,500,000.

Programme 513 –Guyana Prison Services – \$104,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 514 –Police Complaints Authority – \$1,200,000.

Programme 514 –Police Complaints Authority – \$1,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 515 –Guyana Fire Service – \$124,000,000.

Dr. Austin: Project 1200800, Project Profile 222 “Construction and rehabilitation of fire stations and buildings.”: Could the Hon. Minister state what the upgrading of the fire station at New Amsterdam would entail and how much it would cost?

Mr. Rohee: The Ministry has an allocation of \$5 million. This building or this site has been affected from time to time by flooding, and the upgrading steps are to avoid flooding in future.

Programme 515 – Guyana Fire Service – \$124,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 516 –General Registrar Offices – \$4,400,000.

Programme 516 –General Registrar Offices - \$4,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much Hon. Members. That completes the Ministry of Home Affairs. We can now turn to the Ministry of Legal Affairs, Agency 52, and if Members have no objection I would propose that the request of the Hon. Member Mr. Charles Ramson that we do Public Prosecutions first, then Supreme Court second, and the rest of the Ministry third. If that meets with your approval we can proceed in that order. Mrs. Riehl, will you be *firing the shots* on this Ministry.

Mrs. Riehl: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Make sure the bullets have piercing capacity.

Agency 56: Public Prosecutions

Current Expenditure

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$65,428,000.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: I see under Staffing Details the Ministry has an increase of contracted employees from three to five. Could the Minister please state who are those five functionaries that are contracted employees at the Chambers of the Director of Public Prosecutions (D.P.P.)? I do not need their names – the functionaries.

Mr. Ramson: Cde. Chairman, the answer to the Hon. Member is the Ministry has a Typist Clerk, an Administrative Officer, an Accounts Clerk, a Cleaner and a Legal Assistant. That Legal Assistant is a graduate and so is the Administrative Officer.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6111 –Administrative: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the position of the Deputy D.P.P falls under this category, or if not, under which line item?

Mr. Ramson: Which position is it?

Mrs. Riehl: Deputy D.P.P.

Mr. Ramson: The Deputy, that is the Assistant Director of Public Prosecution, falls under line item 6111. Does the Member wish to find out who are the others?

Mrs. Riehl: The Deputy D.P.P. falls under line item 6111.

Mr. Ramson: That is correct.

Mrs. Riehl: Is there a current office holder...?

Mr. Ramson: That is correct.

Mrs. Riehl: ...under line item 6111 - the Deputy D.P.P.

Mr. Ramson: She is the acting Deputy D.P.P.

Mrs. Riehl: There is an acting Deputy D.P.P.

Mr. Ramson: That is correct.

Mrs. Riehl: Is that functionary in receipt of an acting allowance for that position?

Mr. Ramson: No. She is not getting anything, but there is a fixed salary. She is enjoying the highest level this is assigned to that position.

Mrs. Riehl: Is she, since the Minister said it is a “she”, getting the salary of an Assistant D.P.P?

Mr. Ramson: Before we delay the outcome of this thing. It is \$345,009. That is her salary.

Mrs. Riehl: As in what capacity?

Mr. Ramson: As the acting Deputy D.P.P.

Mrs. Riehl: So it is that inclusive of an acting allowance?

Mr. Ramson: Everything! That is at the top of the salary. It is the highest range.

Mrs. Riehl: No. I am asking, what is her substantive position?

Mr. Ramson: It is the Assistant D.P.P. She is now acting D.P.P, as the Member rightly knows.

[**Mr. Backer:** “As you rightly know” – What personalised answer is that?]. You cannot tell me how to answer the question.

Mrs. Riehl: So is she in receipt of an acting allowance? I still do not have whether is in receipt of an acting allowance.

Mr. Ramson: It is all rolled into the contracted salary that she is being paid - \$345,009.

Mrs. Riehl: It is rolled in, alright. I think that is my only question under that line item.

Programme 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$65,428,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$2,188,000.

Mr. Chairman: Since the D.P.P. asks only for capital penalties, I do not think there is anything under this.

Programme 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$2,188,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: That concludes with the Director of Public Prosecutions. We can, therefore, move to the Supreme Court, please, Agency 55.

Mr. Ramson: In the interregnum, Sir, now you see why I asked that that be put in the order in which you agreed to put it.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Ramson: On this side, we have prepared our work.

Mr. Chairman: I am sure the Registrar would like to be rescued just as rapidly as the other Members of that...

Mr. Ramson: I would suggest that you leave that anxiety to me.

Mr. Chairman: I thought we should leave it to the Opposition, Hon. Member. Mrs. Reihl has that in her hands.

Agency 55: Supreme Court

Current Expenditure

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$383, 627,000.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6116 –Contracted Employees: I see, under Staffing Details, there is an increase from thirty-seven to fifty-eight, an increase which nearly doubles the figure from 2009 in monetary terms. Could the Hon. Minister please explain who are these increased numbers of functionaries under the contracted employees line item, from thirty-seven to fifty-eight.

Mr. Ramson: The Hon. Member is quite correct. There has been an increase in that category.

Mrs. Riehl: Who are the functionaries? What are the categories of functionaries?

Mr. Ramson: I am waiting on the follow up. Does the Member want to know how they are?

Mrs. Riehl: That was the question.

Hon. Mr. Ramson: I am prepared to tell the Hon. Member, and this is without any kind of evasion. There is a Commission of Title, a Judicial Officer, as one knows he has retired - he reaches retirement age, so he is not now back on contract, an Administrative Officer, a Principal Personnel Officer, two Confidential Secretaries, three Drivers, six Typist Clerks, a Marshal, seventeen Legal Clerks, five Accounts Clerks, fourteen Office Assistants, five Cleaners, and one Janitor. The Justice Improvement Programme is on the move, and that is why the Ministry moves from thirty-seven to fifty-eight contracted employees.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6111 –Administrative: I see a reduction there, from last year, from ten to eight, would it be that some of those people, under Administrative, come back under contract. Is that the reason for the reduction there?

Mr. Ramson: I am sorry for the delay. I was trying to get an accurate answer for the Hon. Member. Some, who have been retired, have returned to the job, but at a lower salary, under contract of course.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6281 –Security Services: I see there is a huge \$7million increase there, Security Services for the Supreme Court. Could the Minister explain to this Hon. House what is the entity which provides security service for the Supreme Court? First question!

Mr. Ramson: The Hon. Member will be pleased to know the Special Constabulary is the only contracted agency.

Mrs. Riehl: Why is there the \$7 million increase to the Constabulary?

Mr. Ramson: The Ministry has now the responsibility in the outlying areas for the Supreme Courts in Essequibo and in Berbice. Whatever security arrangements that had been made in the past, those are no longer in place. This is currently the security agency which is responsible for securing the Courts.

Mrs. Riehl: Would it be true to say that the Special Constabulary which was the security agent for the Courts in all three Counties before, or were there other private security?

Mr. Ramson: My information is that the Magistrates' Courts at certain times had... Well the Supreme Court is responsible for the security of the Magistrates' Courts, and the Magistrates' Courts were not staffed by the Special Constabulary in all the areas.

Mrs. Riehl: There is a separate Programme, Programme: 552 which deal with Magistrates. I am not *jumping the gun*, but I see there is Security Services there. The Supreme Courts in Berbice and Essequibo have been functioning long before 2010, so I am just querying.

Mr. Ramson: There had to be increased security personnel placed in these outlying districts.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6284 –Other: Could the Hon. Minister state what is the line item “Other”? What does it encompass?

Mr. Ramson: Yes, I gather that there is an increase of \$40 million. There is a budgeted sum for \$40 million, \$20 million of which would be for the increase in the assets in the Library which would include books - law books, texts, magazines, etc. The other \$20 million will be used for binding, for the refurbishing of office furniture, payments to shorthand reporters, and to resuscitate the agency that is responsible for the mediators. That is the other \$20 million.

Mr. Chairman: Is that it, Mrs. Riehl?

Mrs. Riehl: One last question: If this line item 6284 contemplates those items the Minister has mentioned - paying the mediator body, whatever, mediator agency, library, and that sort of things - what does the line item 6294 - Other, \$8 million contemplate? This is another “Other”.

Mr. Ramson: It is a completely separate area. When the Judge assigns State Counsel to do work, he or she has to be paid. The Ministry has to pay for the attendance of jurors, witnesses, etc. All of those areas are covered by the \$8.060 million. That is what the budget has been accorded.

Programme 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$353,627,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 552 - Magistrates’ Department – \$329,186,000

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6116 –Contracted Employees: There is an increase from twenty-nine to thirty-eight. Could the Hon. Minister say who are these additional persons now under contract in the Public Service?

Mr. Ramson: Thank you, Comrade Chairman. It seems as though there is one Principal Magistrate added to the number of Magistrates, four additional Magistrates - those are Junior Magistrates - a Summary Courts Manager, sixteen Legal Clerks, five Typist Clerks, four Office Assistants, five Cleaners, and two Janitors.

Mrs. Riehl: The one Principal Magistrate who was on contract, which the Minister has mentioned, would that person be over the age of fifty-five years?

Mr. Ramson: I can assure the Hon. Member that there is no Public Service rule which requires one to meet fifty-five years before one is put on contract. [Mrs. Riehl: I know that.]. I really could not answer the question, other than telling the Member that. It could be either be fifty-five years and over or fifty-five years and under.

Mrs. Roehl: I am wondering if Magistrates are employed on contract who are of age or in the system. Could the Hon. Minister, the Hon. Attorney General, state which line item comes the position of the Clerk of Court - the Senior Clerk of the Magistrates' Court - is it Senior Technical?

Mr. Ramson: In keeping my wish to assist at all times, I believe that the Clerk of Court works at the ground floor of Court One. That designation is the Principal Clerk of the Court, not Chief Clerk of Court.

Mrs. Riehl: Under which line item?

Mr. Ramson: It is Administrative.

Mrs. Riehl: It is Administrative.

Mr. Ramson: That is what I am advised.

Mrs. Riehl: Now, could the Minister say whether that person is in the position as the Principal Clerk of Court? Does he hold that substantive position?

Mr. Ramson: I can assure the Hon. Member that there is no current incumbent.

3.36 p.m.

Mrs. Riehl: Is there then an acting incumbent to that office?

Mr. Ramson: Informally, the person is performing the functions of that office. You know we have a lot of people performing the functions.

Mrs. Riehl: I know that. Is that person in receipt of an acting allowance for performing the functions of the Principal Clerk?

Mr. Ramson: I gather from the Registrar who is the officer responsible for payments, that that person is not in receipt of any further emoluments.

Mrs. Riehl: Is there any reason why for the last three years that person has been performing the functions and not been in receipt of the acting allowance?

Mr. Ramson: Well I believe that this Budget that I am concerned with is for moneys that will be paid out for the future. I do not know anything about the past. I just came on myself.

Mrs. Riehl: Is any acting allowance catered for in line item 6111 for that person who is holding the fort, so to speak, as the Principal Clerk of Court?

Mr. Ramson: Nothing is budgeted for it, but we anticipate that that position will be advertised and filled very shortly.

Programme 552 – Magistrates’ Department - \$329,186,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature - \$62,000,000

Mrs. Riehl: Hon. Minister, under line item 2403900 – Land and Water Transport – I see there is a budgeted figure there of \$10 million for the purchase of vehicles. Could you say how many vehicles will be purchased?

Mr. Ramson: I gather that there is the plan to buy three motor cars and one pick up. The Supreme Court will have one motor car and the pickup. Those vehicles will be used in Region 4.

Mrs. Riehl: Hon. Minister did you say three motor cars and one pickup?

Mr. Ramson: That would be for both the Supreme Court and Magistrate’s Court because you are going to ask me the same question when we come to the Magistrate’s court.

Mrs. Riehl: No. There is no figure there for vehicles for the Magistrate’s Court. What I am going to ask you now, Hon. Minister, with the purchase of these additional four vehicles, what will now constitute the fleet of vehicles? I see vehicles driving around with the logo Supreme

Court at the side. How many vehicles now in total will that bring the Supreme Court with the acquisition of these four?

Mr. Ramson: There is the current, not a fleet, but a batch of four. I have four vehicles for myself. That is not a fleet. Not from the Government you know my own personal vehicles. So I prefer to say a batch of four and in the course of time, we have to retire them. So at any given time we may have for the Supreme Court, eight vehicles. However, because of the period over which the old ones have been used, we will have to retire two or three of those.

Mrs. Riehl: Who will be the person using the 4 × 4?

Mr. Ramson: In the normal course of things, it has nothing to do with me.

Mrs. Riehl: Seriously asking, who will be the person using this vehicle?

Mr. Ramson: It will be used generally, for carrying various things such as equipment. Sometimes you have materials to move from point to point. [Mr. Corbin: Are you going to farms?] I am afraid of snakes.

Mrs. Riehl: I know that they still have to hire a vehicle when the bailiff goes out to do a levy. They still pay for vehicles. So I wanted to know who will be the person using that vehicle. Anyway, if you are not willing to give the answer then...

Mr. Ramson: I could assure you, under my watch and the new Registrar's watch, that the vehicles will be prudently utilised.

Mrs. Riehl: Alright.

Mr. Chairman: Any questions about the new building and when it will be operational and also when the Court will begin Mrs. Riehl? Are you not interested in those matters? You are seeing that building every day.

Mrs. Riehl: I am seeing that.

Mr. Chairman: We have the Justice Improvement people here and they are ready to answer questions - Justice Singh and Ms. Ramotar. They are all anxious to display how much work has been done under the Justice Improvement Programme.

Mr. Ramson: If I may be of some assistance.

Mr. B. Williams: We did not ask you that question.

Mr. Chairman: Allow the Attorney General please.

Mr. Ramson: I am responding to the Chairman's enquiry and I suppose the Chairman is entitled to ask. You do not want to find out when the Government is working efficiently? The Government is so efficient that by April 2010, I understand that that building will be ready.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. Thank you very much. Hon. Attorney General I presume that women the lawyers who predominate in the area of family law will be the greatest beneficiaries apart from the litigants.

Mr. Ramson: And God forbid what will happen to the male population.

Programme 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature - \$62,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 552 - Magistrate's Department - \$58,500,000

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 1201400 – Construction and Completion of Magistrate Court. Since 2008, I think that the Charity Magistrate's Court was in the making. I am asking for the Hon. Attorney General to stipulate what part of this \$52 million would go towards the completion of the Charity Court. What portion will go to the completion of the Leonora Magistrate's Court and of course the rest will be assumed to be going towards the construction of the Court at Lethem. Could you just give us the breakdown of the \$52 million?

Mr. Ramson: I will give you more than you asked. I wish to be charitable so I will start at Charity. Charity is, and I could say this from firsthand experience, near in completion and \$10.2 million is yet to be paid. Its Estimated Date of Completion (EDC) is April, 2010. At Leonora, \$9 million is to be paid out for its rehabilitation and its EDC is May, 2010. The budgeted cost for Lethem is \$30 million and its completion, subject to the allocation of the plot of land, is estimated to be the third quarter of 2010. As you would have noted if you were doing your mental arithmetic, there would be an outstanding \$2.7 million to make up the entire cost allocated which is \$52 million. That \$2.7 will be for supervision fees for the consultants. You see

we are very parsimonious with our payments to supervisors. That is why I said I would be a little more helpful than the questions that come.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 2501400 – Furniture and Equipment: I see there is a budgeted figure of \$6.5 million for the purchase of furniture and equipment. The Legend Capital Project Profile says that this is for the purchase of printers, fax machines, stabilisers, desks, air conditioner, transformers, refrigerators and chairs. I wish to ask the Hon. Minister which magistrate's office, or where will this refrigerator that is included here in this list of items, description of the project profile here, will benefit from a refrigerator?

Mr. Ramson: There is no Magistrate's Court yet identified for the assignment or the allocation of that refrigerator.

Mrs. Riehl: It is plural so I want to know if you will now give every magistrate a little fridge. It would not be a bad idea, but let us know if you are doing that.

Mr. Ramson: It is generically referred to as refrigerators, but it depends on how much moneys are available. There are quite a few items.

Programme 552 – Magistrate's Department - \$58,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

AGENCY: 52 Ministry of Legal Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Main Office - \$12,707,000

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees – there is only one, but I see that that functionary is in receipt of \$6 million. There is one employee for 2009 and the same one, I assume, is budgeted for 2010. Could you state who that functionary is in receipt of the \$6 million?

Mr. Ramson: Line item 6116 for Programme 521. There is just one contracted employee and he is the Permanent Secretary (P.S.).

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6281 – Security Services: I see there is an increased budgeted figure from \$738,000 to \$2.628 million. My first question is what security service is responsible for the Ministry of Legal Affairs?

Mr. Ramson: Well there is one unarmed guard at the P.S.'s resident.

Mrs. Riehl: What is the name of the service? This is the Main Office of the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

Mr. Ramson: There is some outfit called COPS. Not the original cops under my colleague, Mr. Clement Rohee. This is a different “COPS.”

Mrs. Riehl: Hon. Minister, I just wish to know of this security service of \$2.6 million. The heading says line item 521 which is the Main Office.

Mr. Ramson: It is not the office; it is the Permanent Secretary's permanent home. He comes under my main office, but then he does not live there.

Mrs. Riehl: So the \$2.6 million?

Mr. Ramson: Yes, it is 24 hours service. He gives 24 hours service to me. Do you not see our Ministry is on the move?

Mrs. Riehl: You are certainly spending a lot of money on your P.S.

Mr. Ramson: Well if you have a dollar a year man, you must get a dollar a year service.

Programme 521 - Ministry of Legal Affairs – Main Office - \$12,707,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$38,668,000

Mrs. Riehl: Again Sir - Contracted Employees - you have a movement there from five to nine, line item 6116. Could you please state who these functionaries are on the contracted list?

Mr. Ramson: Apart from the Permanent Secretary, we have four Accounts Clerk II, one Telephonist, one Typist Clerk, two other Typists, Clerk I and there is a Vehicle Driver.

Mrs. Riehl: Hon. Minister, are you saying that your P.S comes again under this Ministry Administration?

Mr. Ramson: No. Apart from the P.S., he is a contracted officer.

Mrs. Riehl: He is on a different Programme. Security services – 6281 – this is under Programme 522. This is the Ministry Administration. You have a budgeted \$2.6 million. Which security entity will get that figure?

Mr. Ramson: I can assure you it is the Special Constabulary. When I was there in 1996 it was the Special Constabulary. However, I protested it and still when it came back in 2009, there was the Special Constabulary.

Mrs. Riehl: This is at your building?

Mr. Ramson: That is correct - at Carmichael Street.

Mrs. Riehl: Alright.

Mr. Ramson: And actually we gave them special conditions. Recently we repainted the building and gave them some special amenities. You should record that.

Programme 522 – Ministry Administration - \$38,668,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers - \$78,432,000

Mrs. Riehl: Same category, Sir - Contracted Employees – line item 6116: There is no increase in the numbers, but there was a \$7 million increase here in the budgeted sum. Could you please explain that?

Mr. Ramson: There are three contracted employees, all of a very highly professional category and their salaries would account for the large increase in the final figure.

Mrs. Riehl: Could you please state who the three highly qualified functionaries are?

Mr. Ramson: There is a Personal Assistant to the Minister who I inherited and there is the Deputy Chief Parliamentary Council and the Chief Parliamentary Council both of whom are on contract.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6281 – Security Services - you have a budgeted figure increase from \$2 million to \$5.6 million. Please state which entity would be your security services. Now this is your chambers, explain the increase.

Mr. Ramson: In 2009, our experience was that the number of guards required had not been supplied. We have now budgeted for guards which would include guards at my house. You are lucky it is not for two of them, and the Chief Parliamentary Council’s residence. That accounts for the increase. The number of guards has been increased at the Attorney General’s Chambers.

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6284 – Other: You have a revised figure that was revised downwards. Can you explain that? I know it is not an increase, but it comes under the same area of Security Services. So I am wondering why that figure was downgraded and what is the “other” there?

Mr. Ramson: You are quite right. We are paying for this improved Information Technology (I.T.) arrangement – technology - where you press something and everything comes up. And we are now using the broadband so it is not as costly. I.C.T., I beg your pardon.

Programme 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers - \$78,432,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 524 – Office of the State Solicitor - \$14,344,000

Mrs. Riehl: Hon. Minister, line item 6111 – Administrative – a position you did not have for the last two years, would it be true to say that that would be the appointment of a State Solicitor now?

Mr. Ramson: Actually we have appointed one of our own to the position of Public Trustee and Official Receiver, and she functions out of the office of the State Solicitor. She is the head of that department.

Mrs. Riehl: Public Trustee and Official Receiver?

Mr. Ramson: Correct.

Mrs. Riehl: Under what line item would the State Solicitor's remuneration be placed?

Mr. Ramson: We do not have a State Solicitor.

Mrs. Riehl: You do not have a State Solicitor. Do you intend to have one?

Mr. Ramson: If you could make a recommendation. All of that work I have to do: State Solicitor, Solicitor General, State Council, A.P.C., everything I have to do. I will be glad if your outfit can send me some names. I am all for inclusive governance at that level.

Mrs. Riehl: Under line item 6281- Security Services - I see you have a budgeted figure there of \$624,000. To whom will that amount be paid and for what? Your Public Trustee/State Solicitor functions out of your office. Is that not so?

Mr. Ramson: There is an additional unarmed guard eight hours per day. That is during the working hours for that particular section and an additional guard from the Special Constabulary. It houses a lot of the finance materials.

Mrs. Riehl: May I ask then, what is your full complement of guards for the entire building? It is one building is it not? And you said there is a special guard in that area?

Mr. Ramson: Yes.

Mrs. Riehl: Can you give us the full complement of guards?

Mr. Ramson: I can assure you that the complement has been increased because of the greater likelihood that if there is a breach of security, we may have to relocate. We do not want any channa bombs to be thrown.

Mrs. Riehl: Considering Sir, you are in the same street where the President lives and you already said that you have all of these increases for security, I am just querying that. You said the special guard in the area of the Public Trustee and Official Receiver is in the special area of the building. Do you have a guard inside the building with the Public Trustee?

Mr. Ramson: I did not say that. I said in the area. A specialised area, because we have found that there were certain breaches that needed to be given some attention.

Mrs. Riehl: There are three new contracted employees under line item 6116 for the office of the State Solicitor.

Mr. Ramson: There is a Legal Clerk, the Trust Officer and another Legal Clerk II.

Programme 524 – Office of the State Solicitor - \$14,344,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

4.06 p.m.

Programme: 525 – Deeds Registry - \$63,004,000

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 6281- Security Services - The Deeds Registry. Could you please state which entity guards the Deeds Registry has and why the steep \$2 million increase?

Mr. Ramson: The current guard service is RK's Security. We have increased security provided especially in the area of escorts for daily banking which is the M.M.C. and as you know their rates have increased. So accordingly, we have budgeted for an increase in that area. We are soon going to, if I may give you some additional information, advertise for an alternative security service- one that monitors a little more closely.

Mrs. Riehl: Are you saying that you have RK's Security guarding the premises of the Deeds Registry and then you have M.M.C. Security which takes money to the bank?

Mr. Ramson: Yes.

Mrs. Riehl: And you are about to advertise for a third security or do you want to replace them?

Mr. Ramson: As an alternative for RK. That is the one on the ground.

Mrs. Riehl: That is understood. You may choose to say, then, that you do not have any Special Constabulary guard in the Deeds Registry because I still see police people?

Mr. Ramson: During the day, I am informed, there is a Special Constable at the century booth, but they are really guarding the Chief Justice.

Programme 525 – Deeds Registry - \$63,004,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Main Office - \$324,500,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you have about eight minutes for this Agency.

Mrs. Riehl: I wish to ask the Hon. Minister under line item 1501100 - Justice Improvement Programme. I see there is a projected budgeted figure of \$322,500,000 provision for Justice Improvement. I wish to ask the Hon. Minister since this programme is supposed to come to an end this very year, 2010, would this be the last tranche being paid to this programme?

Mr. Ramson: I can assure you that the project has been under the terms of the contract between the Inter-American Development Bank and the Government, that is, the Attorney General. It has been extended to 2011 within the terms of the contract. Now you were enquiring about...

Mrs. Riehl: Whether this is the last tranche, the last set of moneys to be paid.

Mr. Ramson: The second tranche is the second and last tranche.

Mrs. Riehl: This is the second and last.

Mr. Ramson: And we are working assiduously to get that money.

Programme 521 – Main Office – \$324,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration – \$1,200,000

Programme 522 – Ministry Administration – \$1,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers – \$4,000,000

Mrs. Riehl: Line item 2401100 - Land and Water Transport. I see there is \$4 million earmarked there for the purchase of a vehicle. Who will be the beneficiary of that vehicle?

Mr. Ramson: There will be the purchase of a Toyota Hilux Surf which is to be used by the P.S.'s Department, not for him personally, but for use by his staff.

Programme 523 – Attorney General's Chambers – \$4,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 524 – Office of the State Solicitor – \$1,970,000

Programme 524 – Office of the State Solicitor – \$1,970,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 525 – Deeds Registry – \$9,800,000

Programme 525 – Deeds Registry – \$9,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: That concludes the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Thank you Hon. Members. We can now proceed to Agency 14, the Public Service Ministry.

Agency: 14 Public Service Ministry

Programme: 141 — Public Service Management – \$353,422,000

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees. Could the Hon. Minister indicate what categories comprise twenty-eight contracted employees?

Dr. Westford: Mr. Chairman we have a Permanent Secretary, one Telephonist, two Office Assistants, two Accounts Clerks II, three Drivers, one Advisor on training, two Student Affairs Officers I, two Student Affairs Officers II, two Senior Personnel Officers, two Principle Personnel Officers, two Documentation Officers, two Systems Development Analysts and one Confidential Secretary.

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6302 - Training (Including Scholarships). For the amount of \$212,633,000 budgeted here, could the Hon. Minister inform this Hon. House what categories of scholarships is contemplated for this expenditure?

Dr. Westford: We have 129 continuing students that we have to be paying stipends for who are going to the University of Guyana. We have some in China, India, Japan, the U.S.A., Guyana School of Agriculture (G.S.A.) and Carnegie. We are contemplating offering 117 additional scholarships to these very entities that I listed.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what disciplines these scholarships are being offered in?

Dr. Westford: At G.S.A. we have persons doing Agriculture, obviously. At the University of Guyana we have persons who are doing Biology, Agricultural Science and International Relations. We also have persons doing Agronomy and Information Technology. In India, we have most persons doing Information Technology. In Japan and China, we have some persons doing Medicine. In Japan, we have persons doing Information Technology as well.

Programme 141 – Public Service Management – \$353,422,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 141 – Public Service Management – \$9,500,000

Programme 141 – Public Service Management – \$353,422,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much Hon. Members. That concludes the Public Service Ministry. We can now turn to the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce.

Agency: 23 Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

Programme: 231 — Main Office – \$412,048,000

Mr. Danny: Line item 6113 - Other Technical and Craft Skilled. Can the Minister say what discipline these trading would entail?

Mr. Chairman: Could you repeat the item?

Mr. Danny: Line item 6113- Other Technical and Craft Skilled.

Mr. Chairman: The question is what discipline the trading would entail?

Mr. Danny: What is the discipline?

Mr. Prashad: Machine operators and electricians.

Mr. Danny: Okay, line item 6255 - Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Can you identify this project?

Mr. Prashad: This is the increased cost for replacing external pipes, servicing and maintenance of main gates, fence and drains of the compound at G.I.C.C. and repairs to the western perimeter fence at the National Exhibition Centre.

Mr. Danny: Line item 6281- Security Services. I observed that from 2008, \$18.1 million to a revise of \$29.1 million and the current budgeted money for 2010, of \$35 million which shows and increase. Can you say what is responsible for this increase?

Mr. Prashad: We have taken over the Guyana International Conference Centre. That is a big compound and we have Federal Management. They are very expensive. Their charge is just about \$20,000. Also the security cost has gone up for the Sophia Exhibition Centre (N.E.C. – National Exhibition Centre). We are in a process of changing the guards there, so to speak, at the N.E.C. because we found them very inefficient. We are in the process of advertising to change them to get someone better.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, today Ms. Kissoon is asking her first question. I would like to extend to Ms. Kissoon, on my behalf and on your behalf, many happy returns. She is celebrating another year today and that is why she looks so special.

Ms. Kissoon: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I ask the other question, a follow-up to line item 6281- could the Hon. Minister say if any new buildings will be rented or are these the same old buildings?

Mr. Prashad: Sorry, if any new buildings will be...?

Ms. Kissoon: Be rented. Are there any added buildings?

Mr. Prashad: Yes, there are added buildings in the compound. In the compound we have a new Amerindian Affairs building, several buildings actually, and we also take care of Guyana National Bureau of Standards, Guyana Tourism Authority and there is new construction going on as well.

Ms. Kissoon: Thank you. Line item 6321: What is the Business Council and Bureau going to do this year since the allocation under the subhead has increased from \$1.5 million to \$15 million?

Mr. Prashad: Well this figure represents increase in salaries, activities related to the development of the tourism sector and the improvement of standards, consumer goods and services:

- G.T.A. - \$90,934,000
- G.N.B.S. - \$92,964,000
- The Consumer Movement Association - \$500,000 and,
- The Guyana Consumers Association - \$400,000

Mr. Danny: Line item 6291- National and Other Events. Can the Minister identify other events?

Mr. Prashad: This is an increase in cost from trips, Mashramani celebrations, Pakaraima Mountain safari. [Mr. Corbin: Bird watching.] The Hon. Opposition Leader can help me there. Yes, bird watching, Rupununi Rodeo, Bartica Regatta, Linden Town Week, Moruka Expo... [Mr. Corbin: Can you reserve a seat on the plane for the Leader of the Opposition?] ...but of course. Motor-racing, Wakenaam Night, Mahdia Expo for the first time – that is something new – Jamzone Summer Weekend, Orealla Regatta, Rockstone Fish Festival, Tourism Awareness Month and other national events.

Mr. Danny: In the National Budget it was said that tourism is supposed to be mitigated from the “fall-short” of sugar. Can the Minister say if these activities would fulfill that obligation?

Mr. Prashad: Yes, this will reflect it.

Mr. Danny: So we will see it in the next Budget, the contribution made by the tourism industry. Line item 6321- Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - I will give you line item

6322 also - Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations. Can the Minister identify these and explain why there is an increase from \$166 million to \$185.2 million?

Mr. Prashad: Yes, I just answered that with the “Birthday Girl”, the Hon. Member, Ms. Vanessa Kisson. I just answered the first one, and the second one – or I can answer it again – goes to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (C.T.O.) - \$15.8 million. That is our annual contribution.

Mr. Danny: Okay, line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: Can the Minister name the categories of employees and the highest and lowest wage?

Mr. Prashad: Yes, first let me give you the highest and lowest paid. The highest paid is \$279,000 and the lowest paid is \$44,000. The categories are: Confidential Secretary, Administrator, Foreman, Office Assistant, Cleaner, Machine Operator, General Manager, Administrative Assistant, Handyman, Labourer, Gardener, Accounts Clerk II, Finance Supervisor, Coordinator of National and other events, Driver, Events Manager, Billing Superintendent and Special Projects Officer.

Programme 231 – Main Office – \$412,048,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 232 – Ministry Administration – \$63,317,000

Mr. Danny: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees - can the Minister give the categories here as well as the highest and lowest paid?

Mr. Prashad: Yes, the highest is \$70,294 and the lowest paid is \$36,098. The categories are Accounts Clerk II, Telephonist, Typist/Clerk, Office Assistant, Driver and System Development Officer.

Mr. Danny: Line item 6281- Security Services. Can you name the service, that is, the company? I have also noted an increase here. Explain this, from 2008 to 2010. It is almost a 100% increase.

Mr. Prashad: Actually it is not a 100% increase. It is just a \$3.7 million increase because for 2009 it was \$12.2 and 2010 it is \$15.9, but that has increased due to employment of efficient and adequate security coverage. We have RK’s Security and COPS.

Mr. Danny: Line item 6284 – Other - could you explain “Other” here?

Mr. Prashad: Printing of brochures, advertisement.

Mr. Danny: Line item 6294 - Other. Could you explain “Other” here?

Mr. Prashad: Line item 6294 - Floral Arrangements and other things to beautify the office. This is a tourism office we must have certain standards as you are aware.

Mr. Danny: Line item 6302 - Training (Including Scholarships). Can you say who is being trained here, in what areas and how would this enhance the promotion of tourism?

Mr. Prashad: Yes, the Clerical and Secretarial staff.

Programme 232 – Ministry Administration – \$63,317,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 233 – Commerce, Industry and Consumer Affairs – \$64,734,000

Mr. Danny: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees. I observed that there is a decrease from thirteen to twelve employees and an increase in wages. At the same time, could you give us the categories of workers and the highest and lowest in wages?

Mr. Prashad: Whilst there is a decrease, I am advised that the increase is because of the 6% increase in numeration.

Mr. Danny: You have line item 6284 - Other, and line item 6294 - Other. Could you explain these?

Mr. Prashad: Line item 6284 - Advertisement, and line item 6294 - Purchase of Brochures.

Mr. Danny: Line item 6302 - Training (Including Scholarships): Are these scholarships for local or international training?

Mr. Prashad: This is for local training to develop small business, furniture and craft items using bamboo and other such materials.

Mr. Danny: Line item 6321- Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. I see here an exponential increase to \$20 million from \$1.5. Could the Minister explain what is happening here?

Mr. Prashad: This increase is a stipend for council members and the implementation of a small business bureau. This is the first time that we are implementing the small business bureau where we have \$15 million there for the small business bureau, council members' honorarium, refreshments for meetings, basic salary and allowance for four staff members of the bureau and gratuity for four staff members, operational expenses, purchase of office supplies and janitorial.

Mr. Danny: Can the Minister give the highest and lowest wages here?

Mr. Prashad: We have not employed the staff as yet. We have advertised for them. It is a new unit that we are creating.

Programme 233 – Commerce, Industry and Consumer Affairs – \$64,734,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 231 – Main Office – \$32,000,000

Mr. Danny: Line item 1208300 - Guyana International Conference Centre: You have here construction of facility, purchase of generator and completion of reservoir. Can the Minister tell this National Assembly what would be the portion allocated to the purchase of the generator?

Mr. Prashad: There would be \$16 million for the generator.

Mr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, line item 4100100, particularly the section dealing with the installation of traffic signs, could the Hon. Minister say if in preparation for this, consideration was given to the multicultural bilingual nature of the situation.

Mr. Prashad: Actually this is a mistake. It is not "traffic signs" it is "tourism signs" and the Ministry of Home Affairs, I suspect, will do the traffic signs which they have already started to look at, but we will also put in signs in Portuguese about places and so on to make sure that we have adequate tourism promotion on the way.

Mr. Danny: On the same line item, can the Minister explain here what kind of facility would be built here under Construction of Facilities?

Mr. Prashad: At the #63 Beach we will construct new benabs. We will run pipes and washroom facilities and construct more changing rooms.

Mr. Danny: Line item 4502500 - Competitiveness Programme- \$350 million is allocated here. Could the Minister explain the provisions for the implementation of the Competitiveness Strategy?

Mr. Prashad: This is new. The \$351 million would be used in 2010 to continue with providing secretarial support to the numerous schematic public/private groups such as those of infrastructure and energy to help the establishment and operation of a small business bureau. This will provide key support to small businesses in areas such as training, business planning and advice. The drafting of legislation for telecommunications reform and transactions, the networking of an information system with the central Deeds Registry, its sub-registries, the Nation Insurance Scheme and the Guyana Revenue Authority will be completed. This will facilitate online filing of registration, renewal of registration and same-day registration of business, supporting the establishment of the Competition Commission Secretariat to conduct reviews of a number of old laws affecting the conduct of business in Guyana and to review legislation governing and procedures required to close a business in Guyana. The implementation of institution strengthening action plan that commenced at the Guyana Office of Investment in 2009 would continue, to continue the specialised training for Guyana National Bureau of standards officers in International Organisation for Standardisation (I.S.O.) standards, the procurement of laboratory equipment and high capacity weights for the *Guyana* National Bureau of Standards (G.N.B.S.) and to accelerate the implementation of the Matching Grants Programme to boost exports of small and medium sized businesses.

4.36 p.m.

Programme 231 – Main Office – \$32,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 232 – Ministry Administration – \$13,500,000

Programme 232 – Ministry Administration – \$13,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 233 – Commerce, Industry and Consumer Affairs – \$496,200,000

Programme 233 – Commerce, Industry and Consumer Affairs – \$496,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Assembly resumed

Assembly suspended accordingly at 4.37 p.m.

Assembly resumed accordingly at 5.26 p.m.

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 16 Ministry of Amerindian Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 161– Amerindian Development - \$279,064,000

Dr. Norton: Under Total Wages and Salaries - line item 6111 - Administrative. Mr. Chairman, there is an increase of approximately \$4.5 million. When we look at the staffing details there is an increase of one could the Hon. Minister say what is the designation of that one increase?

Ms. Sukhai: It is the recruitment of the PAS General.

Dr. Norton: Under the same staffing details - line item 6113 - Other Technical and Craft Skilled. Could the Hon. Minister say if among the two employees there would be another Administrator for the Amerindian Hostel?

Ms. Sukhai: No, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Norton: As a follow-up to that could the Hon. Minister say what are the two designations?

Ms. Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, one is a Student Affairs Officer and the next is a Storekeeper II.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, could I kindly ask the Hon. Minister under Other Technical and Craft Skilled, the same line item, where would I find the welfare officer or social worker? There is no welfare officer or social worker.

Ms. Sukhai: They would be found under Contracted Employees.

Dr. Norton: Under Contracted Employees - line item 6116 - Staffing Details; could the Hon. Minister say what these six contracted employees increase would be.

Ms. Sukhai: There are five management development officers.

Dr. Norton: Under line item 6243 - Janitorial and Cleaning Supplies - would the Hon. Minister kindly say with the \$1,200,000 allocated to this department if that will be sufficient taking into consideration the overflowing and unsanitary conditions that we now have at the toilet facilities of the Amerindian Hostel in Princess Street?

Ms. Sukhai: The increase will cater for additional support to the Amerindian hostel and for the new student dormitory that is being constructed in Liliendaal.

Dr. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say under Other Operating Expenses - line item 6294 - Other, if in this line item would be included the purchase of mattresses for the Amerindian Hostel that are now in a deplorable condition.

Ms. Sukhai: No, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Norton: Then could the Hon. Minister say, where we would find that provision.

Ms. Sukhai: There is no allocation this year for that.

Dr. Norton: So we take it that in spite of the fact, right now at the Amerindian Hostel the mattresses are without covering, torn, and soiled there would be no allocation for the purchasing of such.

Ms. Sukhai: I have already answered that question Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman under line item 6292 – Dietary - could the Hon. Minister say for the \$16 million allocated who will benefit from this.

Ms. Sukhai: The patients at the Amerindian Hostel and the students that will go to the new dormitory later in the year.

Dr. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say when one takes into consideration the fact that on an average, including patients and students who are there, we have on a daily basis about 100 persons. If we take that into consideration for one year the Ministry is asking the administrator of the Amerindian Hostel to provide meals for those persons at a cost less than \$150 per meal.

Ms. Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, that is not so.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say what is the average cost of a meal given to the patient at the Amerindian Hostel?

Ms. Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, \$300. [**Mrs. Backer:** Ow! That cannot work. They have to get supplementary.]

Dr. Norton: Under line item 6302 – Training (Including Scholarships) - almost \$70 million are allocated. It includes scholarships. Could the Hon. Minister say, if we are considering value for money, what is the percentage of those students who are trained under this line item that obtain jobs after graduation.

Ms. Sukhai: The government's responsibility to our nation including the Amerindians is to provide access to education to Amerindians like any Guyanese.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, is the Minister saying that it is not the government's obligation to provide jobs also?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister did not say that Hon. Member.

Ms. Sukhai: The government is only one employer. There are many other sectors which provide employment for our nation.

Dr. Norton: The same line item; the Hon. Minister is saying she cannot provide a percentage of persons who are trained under the allocation here with respect to job acquisition after training.

Ms. Sukhai: I did not deny giving a percentage of those who would have found employment after training from scholarships. But I do not have the figure here.

Ms. Kissoon: Mr. Chairman, line item 6241 - Rental of Buildings - could the Hon. Minister say why the 101% increase in this line item and what these buildings will be used for?

Ms. Sukhai: Under the National Hinterland Secure Livelihood Programme we have five international specialists and have rented very humble abodes for them in Region 1.

Dr. Norton: Under line item 6281 - Security Service: Could the Hon. Minister say which security service is employed right now at the Amerindian Hostel?

Ms. Sukhai: Strategic Action.

Dr. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister say taking into consideration the increase in \$6 million as compared to the revised budget of 2009, if there is satisfaction from the work provided by this security service taking into consideration that they do not have an office that functions after 4.00 p.m. so that if guards do not turn up for work there is nobody to complain to and of course guards are found to be non-literate working there as security.

Ms. Sukhai: That is not so. We are satisfied with the guard service. In fact our contract was amended to include that there be a specific age range and able bodied guards. I will also say that the increase you have asked about is to cater for additional guards to strengthen the security system we have and to extend it to the modern dormitory which is under construction.

Programme 161 – Amerindian Development – \$279,064,000 - agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme 161 – Amerindian Development – \$217,981,000

Dr. Norton: Under Project Code1400100 - Amerindian Development Fund - could the Hon. Minister say where would the construction of the benabs and guests houses be and her reason for choosing same?

Ms. Sukhai: The multipurpose building will be at Kopinang. We have had cuts in our budget so there will not be any guest house.

Dr. Norton: And benabs Mr. Chairman?

Ms. Sukhai: There will not no benab built this year.

Dr. Norton: Must I take it confirmed by the Minister, that there will be no guest house or benab in this year?

Ms. Sukhai: No, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, under the same project code, could the Hon. Minister say like what was done under Agency 22, Office of the Prime Minister, which of the villages will benefit from the installation of a solar system?

Ms. Sukhai: Under this programme head only one village will be supported in terms of solar power and that will be Baramita.

Dr. Norton: Project Code 2403000, Water Transport – Amerindian Affairs: Would the Hon. Minister say if any of the outboard engines being purchased would go to the village of Wanakai where the children have to paddle to and from school?

Ms. Sukhai: There is none budgeted because that village did not make any request. If they had made it through you, you should have been able to channel it early to us.

Dr. Norton: With the purchase of a boat under that same project code could the Hon. minister say, taking into consideration the wear and tear and suitability, what would it be made of, aluminum or wood?

Ms. Sukhai: In certain regions like Region 1 we purchase wooden boats; that is the demand. In other areas like Region 9 and some parts of Region7 it would be aluminum.

Dr. Norton: Under Project Code1400100 - Amerindian Development Fund - the project profile speaks of purchasing library furniture. Could the Hon. Minister say where would the furniture be placed?

Ms. Sukhai: No library furniture would be purchased this year. Again, I say due to cuts we would not be able to purchase that.

Dr. Norton: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say under that same project code, the rehabilitation of the building of the women's sewing group where is that building located.

Ms. Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, it will be located at Apoteri.

Programme 161 – Amerindian Development – \$217,981,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 46 Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation

Current Expenditure

Programme: 461 – Public Hospital – \$3,460,648,000

(The Opposition walked out of the Chamber)

Programme 461 – Public Hospital – \$3,460,648,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 461 – Public Hospital – \$111,000,000

Programme 461 – Public Hospital – \$111,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 47 Ministry of Health

Current Expenditure

Programme: 471 – Ministry Administration – \$575,491,000

Programme 471 – Ministry Administration – \$575,491,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 472 – Diseases Control – \$458,425,000

Programme 472 – Diseases Control – \$458,425,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 473 – Primary Health Care Services – \$402,196,000

Programme 473 – Primary Health Care Services – \$402,196,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 474 – Regional and Clinical Services – \$2,226,658,000

Programme 474 – Regional and Clinical Services – \$2,226,658,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 475 – Health Sciences Education – \$342,895,000

Programme 475 – Health Sciences Education – \$342,895,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 476 – Standards and Technical Services – \$216,940,000

Programme 476 – Standards and Technical Services – \$216,940,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 477 – Rehabilitation Services – \$190,455,000

Programme 477 – Rehabilitation Services - \$190,455,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 471 – Ministry Administration – \$46,000,000

Programme 471 – Ministry Administration – \$46,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 472 – Diseases Control - \$88,000,000

Programme 472 – Diseases Control - \$88,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 473 – Primary Health Care Services – \$320,200,000

Programme 473 – Primary Health Care Services – \$320,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 474 – Regional and Clinical Services – \$1,189,109,000

Programme 474 – Regional and Clinical Services – \$1,189,109,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 475 – Health Sciences Education – \$3,300,000

Programme 475 – Health Sciences Education – \$3,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 476 – Standards and Technical Services – \$11,300,000

Programme 476 – Standards and Technical Services – \$11,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 477 – Rehabilitation Services – \$5,600,000

Programme 477 – Rehabilitation Services – \$5,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 03 Ministry of Finance

Current Expenditure

Programme: 031 – Ministry Administration – \$11,626,895

(Opposition returned to the Chambers)

Mr. Chairman: I thought you had walked out Mr. Murray?

Mr. Murray: I am here, Sir. I am here.

Account Code 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - \$6,343,388. The Ministry of Finance always has big numbers, only deals with big numbers. The sum of \$95,763,000 is voted for Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit as a subsidy and contribution to local organisation. Is the Minister not aware that the Auditor General has for many years made the observation that this unit is not properly placed and should not be separately identified since it is ostensibly a department of the Ministry of Finance and it should therefore be placed in a line

item position within the Ministry? If the Minister is aware could he say what steps he proposes to take to comply with the Auditor General's recommendation that the Ministry of Finance transfer the operation of C.A.N.U. to the direct managerial control of the Customs and Trade Administration of the Guyana Revenue Authority?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I am aware of the observation made by the Auditor General in relation to this matter. And I wish to advise the Hon. Member that the matter is engaging consideration.

Mr. Murray: This is the same answer we had last year. This is something that has been festering for many years. So could the Hon. Minister say whether apart from the consideration he talks about he foresees finalisation of transfer of this unit to its proper place during 2010?

Dr. Singh: I would be in no position to speculate on the outcome of the consideration that the matter is currently engaging.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairman, does the Minister accept the recommendation of the Auditor General? Because he seems to be dodging on that. Does he accept the validity of the Auditor General's observation of the need to have this unit put within the Customs and Trade Administration?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, as I said the matter is currently being considered. I am not sure what else I can say beyond that.

Mr. Murray: With the greatest respect to the Hon. Minister that is an evasive answer. The question is very specific. For years the Auditor General has made observation about the impropriety of having C.A.N.U. being treated as a subsidised organisation. My question to the Minister is does he accept the observation that C.A.N.U. ought to be placed within the Customs and Trade Administration. He is not answering that question specifically. And while I cannot force him to answer it I must say I will be gravely disappointed if he evades answering the question.

Dr. Singh: First of all, I would like to take objection to the use of the word impropriety. The Hon. Member is imputing language to the Auditor General. I certainly do not recall the Auditor

General used the word impropriety. That seems to be a figment of the imagination of the Hon. Member.

Mr. Murray: Sir, if the Auditor General has made the observation that appropriate measures be taken by the Ministry of Finance to transfer the operations to the Customs and Trade Administration it is because in my respectful view, even if the Minister does not agree, that it is an impropriety to continue to have the unit placed as an organisation that simply receives a subsidy. So we may differ over that but the question remains: Does the Minister accept the recommendation of the Auditor General to have this agency transferred? The question as to how soon it may be effected is another matter. But he seems not to want to commit himself to accepting the principle. And I would like, if only for purposes of transparency, if we understand whether or not he accepts the recommendation of the Auditor General. That is what I am seeking to have.

Mr. Chairman: Anything else Mr. Murray?

Mr. Murray: Yes, Sir. Does the Minister agree that for some time now the State Planning Secretariat was to be closed? This has not taken place.

5.56 p.m.

Does the Minister contemplate anytime in the foreseeable future winding up this entity? This is in respect of the Ministry of Finance programme administration at details of Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations; among which are listed the State Planning Secretariat to receive \$130 million.

Dr. Singh: I am not aware as the Hon. Member said, to use his words that, the State Planning Secretariat was to be closed. I am aware of an observation made by the Auditor General, if that is what he is alluding to, in relation to the State Planning Secretariat. But I am not aware that the State Planning Secretariat was to be closed. In any event, the observation made by the Auditor General's Report, like the previous one, this one is also engaging active consideration by the administration.

Mr. Murray: While again the Minister fancies on cribbing on words, does he accept that the recommendation of the Auditor General is to dissolve the State Planning Commission. Does he

accept that that is the recommendation, if we are to use the exact words of the Auditor General's report? Secondly, Sir, since the Minister is not in a position to express any commitment to the dissolution of the State Planning Commission, could he inform this National Assembly, how soon we can look forward to the financial statements of the State Planning Commission which have been missing for the years 1992 to 2007, and to have them submitted to the Auditor General for auditing.

Dr. Singh: I would say that all of the expenditure expended under the Ministry of Finance on the State Planning Secretariat is subject to audit as part of the audit of the Ministry of Finance's accounts.

Mr. Murray: I am sure the Minister is aware that the State Planning Commission is a statutory body set up under the law, and that until such time as it is dissolved it has to comply with the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, which requires that four months after the end of each fiscal year, statutory bodies have to make their accounts available for auditing and for submission through the Minister to the National Assembly. That has not been done for the period 1992 to 2007. My question to the Hon. Minister is; when does he propose to have such accounts audited and submitted to this National Assembly as required by the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act?

Dr. Singh: As I said Mr. Chairman, the expenditure of the State Planning Secretariat is audited as part of the accounts of the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairman I crave your indulgence to say that this is again another very evasive answer by the Minister. As yesterday with the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority, a statutory body set up in law, the law requires that there be independent auditing of these accounts. To say that in the case of the N.D.I.A., that the accounts are audited in the process of the Ministry of Agriculture accounts being audited, is being repeated here in the case of the S.P.S., that in the auditing of the Ministry of Finance's account, in the process the State Planning Secretariat accounts are audited. That is not what is required by law. The law does not shelter the State Planning Commission under the Ministry of Finance. The law says that the commission must itself, independently have its accounts audited and submitted to the National Assembly. Could the Minister say when he intends to comply with the law?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman I have nothing further to add on this matter.

Mr. Murray: This is the normal thing you get. This is the arrogance we meet with. This is what we have to put up with. Unfortunately Sir, I am not done. Line item 6312 says Subventions to Local Authorities. A sum of \$6,350,000,000 is budgeted for that purpose. My question to the Hon. Minister is; could he inform this National Assembly whether the sum identified in the budget for 2010, sorry, I am talking about rates and taxes. I am sorry. 6311 – Rates and Taxes – where the sum of \$160,291,000 is budgeted, could the Minister inform this National Assembly whether this sum will take care of the total amount of rates and taxes payable in respect of all Government buildings? Subject to such tax for the year 2010.

Dr. Singh: Mr Chairman that is our expectation.

Mr. Murray: Thank you Hon. Minister at least that is a specific answer. I welcome change. Line item 6141 - Revision of Wages and Salaries - I see the sum of \$2,026,973,000 earmarked for that purpose. Could the Minister explained to the National Assembly whether this money is in contemplation of a further unilateral increase by the Government sometime in 2010 to the Government workers, or is it to cover the 2009 6% increase which the Ministry may not have had the opportunity to budget for given when the announcement was made? The budget may have already been in. Could he enlighten this National Assembly what exactly this sum represents?

Dr. Singh: The cost of the 6% increase that was awarded at the end of last year, 2009, with effect from the 1st of January 2009 has in fact already been incorporated into the employment cost budget of the respective agencies. **[Member: Which year?:]** Mr. Chairman I think Mr. Murray understands what I am speaking of. So the respective agencies employment cost allocation already includes that. The amount provided under line item 6141 for the revisions of wages and salaries in 2010 is, as this line item traditionally is intended, to meet the cost of whatever salary increase emerges to be payable in 2010 along with employment cost, and additional allocations that might be required by other agencies. As the Hon. Member knows, we only budget for filled positions. So in the event that additional employment cost allocations are required by other agencies that is typically met from this allocation. So this allocation will meet

the cost of any additional employment cost requirements in other budget agencies that might emerge to be necessary along with whatever salary increase emerges as payable in 2010.

Programme 031 – Ministry Administration – \$11,626,895 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 032 – Government Accounting Administration - \$2,890,156,000

Mr. Murray: My one question on this Sir, I see under line item 6342 - Pension Increases - the sum of \$2,042,000,000. Mr. Minister is this a similar provision as that for revision of wages and salary in respect of pensions?

Dr. Singh: It is in a manner of speaking, and I say this for the following reason. The original pension that is awarded to a government employee when they are retired is classified under statutory expenditure. Subsequent increases that are awarded over the course of the years are met from pension increases. That subhead would be used to pay increases of pensions that would have been awarded over the course of the years to government pensioners.

Ms. Kissoon: Mr. Chairman, line item 6112 - Senior Technical - what positions are the two additional persons going to fill?

Dr. Singh: Both of the new positions are Junior Financial Analysts.

Ms. Kissoon: Line item 6131, with the reduction of three members of staff for the current year, why the 20.3% increase in this line item?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, through you, can I ask the Hon. Member to repeat her question please.

Ms. Kissoon: With the reduction of three members of staff for the current year, why the 20.3% increase in this line item?

Dr. Singh: The increase is principally associated with certain acting allowances that have become payable and duty allowances; certain acting and duty allowances that have become payable.

Ms. Kissoon: 6261, does the 62% increase mean that the positive works to the value of 10 million more is planned for 2010 and could we have some idea of the works.

Dr. Singh: The increase is principally associated with increased visits for inspection purposes and site visits.

Ms. Kissoon: 6284, Hon. Minister it is noted that this line item described as *Other* has increased by approximately 88% and involves 128 million. Could we have details?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member would note that 6282 has decreased significantly. So if I may, through you Sir, direct the Hon. Member's attention to line item... **[Interjection]** I am aware that you asked about 6284 and I am drawing your attention to 6282 that has reduced significantly. The reason why 6282 has reduced significantly and 6284 has increased is a reallocation or a revised classification of expenditure associated with licensing fees for software and other I.T. purposes. So expenditure that was previously met under 6282 is now being met under 6284.

Ms. Kissoon: My final question to you, Hon. Minister, through the Chairman, giving your comments during the debate about extensive training, why was only \$298,000 spent of \$5 million in 2009, and how are you certain that the \$2.5 million for this year would really be spent?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman during the course of 2009 the Ministry benefited significantly from training provided through a number of foreign funded projects such as the Millennium Challenge project. These will not be available during the course of 2010. We anticipate in fact a more significant part of the training being carried by local resources.

Programme 032 – Government Accounting Administration - \$2,890,156,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 031 – Ministry Administration - \$2,500,000

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairman, I would like to address item...

Mr. Speaker: I note that it is listed for Ms. Webster. Are you in a position to answer Hon. Member, I do not see Ms. Webster here?

Dr. Singh: I will be answering.

Mr. Murray: Item 1402400 for which the sum of \$120 million is being proposed for 2010. The project profile number 22 which describes this project, informs that it entails rehabilitation and maintenance of community roads and road structures in the Regions. Could the Hon. Minister inform this National Assembly whether the Ministry of Finance has the necessary engineering, road construction and equipment facilities for itself to execute this project as described in project profile 22.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, while we do have some expertise, the Ministry of Finance does not execute the actual works provided for under this allocation. These works are in fact executed through the R.D.C.s concerned.

Mr. Murray: Sir if I am permitted, I would like a sentence to congratulate the Minister for allowing projects of this nature to be executed through the Regional Democratic Council. Because, it accords with the observation I made yesterday, that community roads and road structures are better left if local democracy is to be given real meaning, to the R.D.C.s and N.D.C.s in the various communities. So I congratulate you for that. The only question that then remains to be answered is whether there should not be a change in executing agency from the Ministry of Finance, or at least it should say “R.D.C.s on behalf of the Ministry of Finance” so that at least it would have been clearer. The reason I asked the question is because it says here “Executing agency - Ministry of Finance”. That is the only observation I wish.

Dr. Singh: I note that it was an observation rather than a question. I would say that the Ministry of Finance, worked very closely with the R.D.C.s and N.D.C.s concerned.

Mr. Murray: I now turn to line item 3401000 which has a sum of \$6.15 billion earmarked to be spent in 2010. The legend in the Capital Expenditure part of the Budget speaks of provisions for Low-Carbon Development initiatives. Mr. Minister my question is, given the legend and given what is written in the project profile, is it to be understood that the realisation of these projects in 2010 are tied to and dependent on the resources of \$6,150 million equivalent I believe to approximately US\$30 million being made available under the Guyana-Norway agreement?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman the answer to that question would be, not necessarily.

Mr. Murray: If not necessarily, then is the Minister saying to this National Assembly that should that money not be realised under that agreement that he will add the \$6.1 Billion worth of deficit to the budget or will he be making cuts to existing Programmes projected for 2010 if the money does not come.

Mr. Speaker: Some of both.

Mr. Murray: I am sorry Sir?

Mr. Speaker: I am just suggesting an answer.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman I would not exactly wish to speculate on that eventuality. What I will say is that: we have provided in the budget for these projects, which are projects that articulated under the Low-Carbon Development Strategy. We have also provided in the Budget for the anticipated inflow of \$6 billion equivalent roughly to US\$30 million. The realising of those inflows will depend on the concluding of the arrangements for their disbursement. But I would not as I said necessarily wish to speculate on those eventualities.

Mr. Murray: With great respect to the Hon. Minister, as someone who has responsibility for the public finances of the country, I am very disappointed in his answer.

Mr. Speaker: We do not plan for failure Mr. Murray. We plan for success.

Mr. Murray: Sir, well then tell me that you are planning to get the money. But he said not necessarily. Look Sir, he is having it all his way. Not necessarily from any money coming from Norway, so he is saying he is not committing to that. He is leaving the possibility open that it may or may not come. He himself just said that there are conditions to be met. He said not necessarily will he cut other Programmes, not necessarily will he run a larger budget deficit. So what necessarily will happen if this thing does not materialise. All the possibilities are ruled out. He does not want to answer that because he cannot tell me what are or not necessary again. I have this further question Sir; the Minister in his Budget statement talked about the money being delivered through a Guyana REDD Investment Fund (GRIF), I see here in the front part of the Estimates that \$6.1 billion is identified as inflows under Capital. Some are in here; the Minister knows that it is in there, table 6. My question to the Hon. Minister is whether I will be drawing the right conclusion if I were to infer from the way this US\$30 million is being treated in the

Estimates together with what he said in the Budget, that the money will be paid into the consolidated fund of Guyana before expenditure, assuming the money is realised, before these projects are undertaken.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman that is how we anticipate this operation will be executed.

Mr. Murray: I must say that this is the most delightful moment in respect of this. For the first time I have been able to extract a commitment from the relevant Minister, namely the Minister of Finance, that in fact this money will be paid into the consolidated fund. It relieves me quite a lot this afternoon and I want to thank him for that elucidation.

Mr. Speaker: If there is nothing else I will put the question.

Mr. Murray: I am sorry Sir. Could you please give me half a minute? I think we are ahead of time since a certain Ministry was not examined at all.

Mr. Speaker: No, we have to delink that time from this process.

Mr. Murray: You are knocking it out Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Dr. Ramsaran was very much relieved because he had responsibility for the Ministry of Health. We can leave early now.

Mr. Murray: I wish I had known that Sir.

Mr. Speaker: It is on your document Mr. Murray.

Mr. Murray: Line item 4500900, \$2 billion which says "Provision for final payment - agricultural component of the new Skeldon factory etc." and in the description of the project there is an item which reads "support to the agriculture component of the new Skeldon factory". Could the Minister inform this National Assembly whether this support that is described here is really support to those private cane farmers who are expected to provide at least 30% of the cane necessary for inputting into the factory's 1.2 million tonne need?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, no it does not. In fact the Hon. Member would note that the amount provided is specific funding. The two funding sources as indicated in the legend are the C.D.B. and China. I am also sure that the Hon. Member will recall that we had and have been executing

a project supported by the C.D.B. on investments in the agriculture operations at Skeldon. The amount provided anticipates the completion of that project.

The Chinese amount, the amount being provided under specific financing relates to the final payments in relation to the co-generation plant.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairman, my follow up question to the Hon. Minister is - although this money is being lent, made available to the Government of Guyana, that is why it finds itself in the Estimates of the Government - whether this money being made available to the Government for the Skeldon project is money that is being un-lent to GuySuCo or is it capital that is being injected by way of Government equity into the project?

Dr. Singh: I am sure that I answered this question on previous occasions, but I am happy to answer it again. These resources are being un-lent to GuySuCo.

Mr. Murray: It is good to have the repetition. Does the Minister not agree that a decision has already been taken? Let me put it this way; would the Minister not agree that GuySuCo has already lapsed in making repayments to the Government on the loans that have already been disbursed un-lent to GuySuCo? That is why I ask, because they have lapsed in repayment to the Government. The question I then want to ask is whether this, although you said it is being un-lent, whether this in fact a reality? Is it not true that GuySuCo has made a proposal to the Government that the Government should absorb this repayment directly themselves and treat the sums that would otherwise have to be paid by GuySuCo back to the Government and ultimately the taxpayers who ultimately carry this burden of the repayment of the loan? In fact they are relieved of that and they give you equity in return for that loan.

6.26 p.m.

Dr. Singh: First of all I would say that it is a fact that these resources were un-lent to GuySuCo and they remain un-lent resources. It is also a fact, as the Hon. Member is evidently aware, that the repayment schedule of some of the resources un-lent to GuySuCo is a matter currently being discussed between Government and GuySuCo. But let me say this we are, as has already been said and repeated as recently as in the Budget Speech and during the course of our debate, firmly committed as a Government to making sure that GuySuCo goes through the particularly difficult

period that they are currently experiencing, not least as a result of the dramatic cut to the export prices that they receive. We are firmly committed to working with the industry to see it emerge a far more efficient, competitive and a viable sugar industry for the long term and this is a commitment that our Government is unwavering about.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairman, having heard all those words from the Hon. Minister of Finance, I am still minded to ask him if in all of that glorious talk about working with GuySuCo, whether in fact, there is not the distinct possibility that these moneys un-lent to GuySuCo, GuySuCo will not have the ability to repay them and therefore it may have to be in the contemplation of the Government, as it partners with GuySuCo, that it may have to assume the responsibility for repaying these loans.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member appears to have a peculiar proclivity for speculation; I will not join him in this regard.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Chairman I must respond to that. I do not have a proclivity for speculation but the Minister has a proclivity for ‘not necessarily’ and I thought he would have told me that that is not necessarily the case. But, for now Sir, we will leave it at that because we cannot agree. He knows what he knows and I know what I know. Thank you, Sir.

Programmeme 031 – Ministry Administration - \$10,757,203,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programmeme: 032 – Government Accounting Administration - \$2,500,000

Programmeme 032 – Government Accounting Administration - \$2,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members that concludes our consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2010.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have some housekeeping matters to conclude and I would seek your patience for that.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply considered the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2010 and approved of them as printed.

Mr. Speaker: I will now put the Motion which is that this National Assembly approves of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2010 of a total sum of \$125,568,573,000 excluding \$17,207,026,000 which is chargeable by law as detailed therein and summarised in the Schedule and agree that it is expedient to amend the law to make further provision in respect of finance.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, with your leave I move that Standing Orders Numbers 13 and 54 be suspended to enable the Appropriation Bill 2010 to be introduced at this stage.

Mr. Speaker: The question is that Standing Orders 13 (N) and 54 be suspended.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 171 of the Constitution I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Appropriation Bill 2010 – Bill No. 2 of 2010 for consideration of the National Assembly and I now present the Bill to the Assembly and move that it be read the first time.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that the Appropriation Bill 2010 – Bill No. 2 of 2010 be read for the first time.

Motion carried

Bill read for the First time and taken through its remaining stages.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, our business is concluded for today. Before I take the adjournment I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Members of the National Assembly, both Government and Opposition, for their contribution to this debate and for their

effort in making this debate successful and for assisting the House through this period of two weeks.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Clerk and his staff for their sterling work and contribution. As always, they performed to the best of their ability with great commitment and dedication to the work of this National Assembly.

I would like to thank the press and all the other members, the Government members, those who came in support of the Opposition to listen and witness the debate and the government employees who came to help us in this very important process.

You may know, and you have all been thinking that the process of approving the Estimates needs to be looked at but not in this Parliament; the next Parliament after my term is over. I think the resources to bring together the entire National Assembly for the consideration of the Estimates is perhaps an expenditure of resources that might not be necessary and it can be saved upon. For example, when we do local government or we do finance, only a certain number of people are especially interested in each particular ministry. It might be appropriate for a future Parliament to consider another method – a Committee method – of approving the Estimates within the same time frame but enabling more direct participation and that will assist also people who come from the various agencies and who are interested, members of the public to be able to participate in a more effective and efficient way in approving the Estimates. I would commend that for consideration for the future and once again thank you very much for your cooperation.

Mr. Corbin: Mr. Speaker, if I may crave your indulgence since you have utilised the liberty of the Chair to make certain remarks, to also place on record our appreciation for the hard work of the staff of the Parliament Office who have continuously worked, I believe, beyond the call of duty to ensure that we provide a level of service to the people of Guyana. I would like to place on record the People's National Congress Reform's commendation to them and I hope that the Clerk would have the fortitude to carry on despite the challenges.

May I also use the same opportunity, Sir, to extend to our Muslim brothers and sisters special salutations and greetings on the occasion on Youmun-Nabi - a celebration of the birth anniversary of the Holy Prophet Mohammed, Peace and blessings are upon him. I hope that the

occasion of this commemoration be a period for reflection on his life's example and the teachings of Islam.

May I also, since this is a very significant weekend when we indeed demonstrate our multicultural and multi-religious nature and I am happy that we have reached the point as a nation where we have recognised all these festivals, use the opportunity to extend to our Hindu brothers and sisters the same felicitations for the celebration of the festival of Phagwah. May we contemplate on the significance of the occasion and reflect on the benefits, of sacrifice so that we can together work to make this nation one that we can be proud about and one which will really make the reality of our Motto: "One People, One Nation, One Destiny.

Youmun-Nabi greetings and Happy Phagwah and of you who are celebrating lent, may you continue to fast with blessings. Thank you, Sir. [Applause]

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I, too, on behalf of the Government side would want to extend our appreciation to all members of the House; it was quite a long hectic period of more than two weeks of considering the Budget. I would like to extend appreciation to you, Sir, and the Deputy Speaker for the days she took your seat and also extend appreciation to all the staff of Parliament Buildings. I know that they may have worked beyond the call of duty during this period and maybe during the next following way.

I would like to take this opportunity, too, to extend greetings to our Muslim brothers, in particular, on the anniversary of Youmun-Nabi and to our Hindu brothers for Phagwah. I call on all of us to stay in the struggle so that good would always overcome evil.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I take the opportunity to move that the House be adjourned unto a date to be fixed.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Members, the House is adjourned to a date to be fixed.

Adjourned accordingly at 6.40 p.m.