

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

133RD Sitting

Thursday, 4TH November, 2010

The Assembly convened at 2.23 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

- 1. The death of His Excellency Dr. Nestor Kirchner – Former President of Argentina and Mr. David Thompson – Prime Minister of Barbados.**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would like to take this opportunity to report on the passing of His Excellency Dr. Nestor Kirchner, the Secretary General of the Union of South America (UNASUR) and former President of the Republic of Argentina. I would also like to take this opportunity to mention the passing of Prime Minister David Thompson of Barbados. I would like to extend, on my own and on your behalf, the condolences of the National Assembly to the family of His Excellency Dr. Kirchner and to the people of Argentina. I would like to take this opportunity also to extend our condolences, on my own behalf and on the behalf of the National Assembly, to the family of the late Prime Minister Thompson and the people of Barbados. I would like to ask you to stand for one minute silence in respect to the memories of those distinguished persons.

2. The Welcoming of Mr. Keith Scott

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would to take this opportunity also to welcome back the Hon. Member, Mr. Keith Scott who has been away from us for a very long time. I am aware that Mr. Scott is one, and I hope other Members of Parliament do not enter into any rage of jealousy, of the more popular Members of the National Assembly. I see only one side is clapping the table, but that is okay. So I would like to welcome back the Hon. Member and look forward for his continuing contribution towards the work of the National Assembly.

Mr. Scott: Thank you Mr. Speaker, Members and colleagues. When I first got sick in March, it was quite sudden, and was it not for the timeliness of being taken to the hospital immediately, and being lucky to get prompt attention from Drs. Kimby and Billy Fung-a-fat, things would have been a bit worse. I must thank them, and, as I recuperated, I must also thank Dr. Ramsammy who went out to his way to ensure that I could have gotten treatment for therapy through Ms. Sobers. That has helped and it made a lot of difference. Today, I am able to be here speaking with you much better than when I first took sick. From that day that I had got sick, I have received the love and care of my family and my friends, also my colleagues on both sides of this House as well as the media, itself. I would to say thanks to them all. Thanks is the only word I could find, although it is not enough. For me, from the bottom of my heart, a depth of gratitude, I can only say that what you have done will forever be with me. Like my mother, Margret Arthman, I feel that I was born to serve. Like her, I am dedicated to serving my country. So in health as well as in sickness I shall continue to give of my all to this body of people here and to the nation of Guyana until the very end.

No one else in this House, nobody, could have felt pain I felt, when Dr. Jagan and Mr. Burnham split. From that day to now, I have done all that I could to see in my own way how we can get back together, as the people, to carry our country forward. In those days I remember when it was said, "Do not worry with those politicians let us drink, eat and party still". Today, sadly, our country has got to the point where the younger generation is developing a hatred for one for the other. We have one set of people seeing development at the expense of another set of people. This is a new under-class which that is developing. It is our duty as leaders in this House to therefore do all we can to arrest this new development, or else from our depths of the hell which

we will create we will be saying like Wilfred Orindo, the poet, that, “I am the enemy you kill yesterday, my friend.” We need to change that, and we can and must change that.

Finally, if you can bond with me – one man - then we must recognise what prevents us, as a people, from bonding together so that we can say to forget the talks of Indo and Afro, but let us think as a Guyanese nation, and as one. The time has now come. We must move together and say unity or death. Thank you very much for your considerations.

PRESENTATIONS OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Reports were laid:

- (i) Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of Guyana and on the Accounts of Ministries, Departments and Regions for the fiscal year ended 31st December, 2009.
- (ii) The Auditor General of Guyana Performance/Value for money Audit Report on a Review of the Old Age Pension Programme in Guyana.
- (iii) Minutes of Proceedings of the 22nd Meeting of the Committee of Selection held on Thursday, 21st October, 2010. [*Speaker of the National Assembly*]

The following Rules were laid:

Judicial Service Commission Rules: 2010. [*Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

The following Reports were laid:

- (iv) The Report of the Special Select Committee on the Legal Practitioners (Amendment) Bill 2009 –Bill No. 45/2009. [*Chairperson of the Committee of Legal Practitioners – Minister of Human Services and Social Security*]
- (v) The Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Auditor General’s comments for the year 2006 and the Minutes. [*Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee – Ms. Volda Lawrence*]

STATEMENTS BY MINISTER, INCLUDING POLICY STATEMENTS

Tributes to the late Prime Minister of Barbados, the Hon. David Howard Thompson and Former President of Argentina, the late Dr. Nestor Carlos Kirchner

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It is with a deep sense of sadness that I rise before the Hon. House to pay tribute to the late Prime Minister of Barbados, the Hon. David Howard Thompson who departed this life on October 23rd, 2010, at the relatively young age of 48, after several months of illness due to pancreatic cancer. It is fitted that this tribute be paid to Prime Minister Thompson because of the high office he occupied in a sister CARICOM member state, and his contribution to regional integration. I also want to recognise the fact that he was of Guyanese lineage.

Prime Minister Thompson, though born in England, was raised in Barbados and committed much of his life to public service to the nation and the people he loved. Trained as a lawyer, he began his political career at the age of 25 when he won a by-election for a parliamentary seat of the St. John constituency. He served as a Member of Parliament for the St. John constituency up until the time of his death. During the course of his political career, Mr. Thompson served as the Minister of Community Development and Culture, from 1991 to 1993 and Minister of Finance, from 1993 to 1994.

The spirit of determination of this Caribbean son is exemplified in the fact that he unsuccessfully led the Democratic Labour Party in General Elections in 1994, 1999 and 2000. Even though he resigned following his third electoral defeat in 2000 he once, again, became the party leader and leader of the Opposition in January, 2006. Two years later, Prime Minister Thompson reached the pinnacle of his political career when his Democratic Labour Party emerged victorious at the January 15, 2008 general elections and he became the sixth Prime Minister of Barbados on January 16th, 2008. During his short tenure as Prime Minister of Barbados, the distinguished Prime Minister oversaw the continued economic development of his country through tourism and the provision of financial services. Barbados has the distinction of ranking higher than all the other Caribbean and Latin American countries in the United Nations Human Development index.

Becoming the Prime Minister of Barbados, also propelled Mr. Thompson into the sphere of regional integration movement - CARICOM. His astute mind lent much to the deliberations with his colleagues, Heads of Government, at meetings of CARICOM member states. Prime Minister Thompson was a strong advocate for the implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and

Economy, an area for which he was the lead CARICOM Head of Government in the organisation's quasi-cabinet.

Delivering the feature address at the convocation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy C.S.M.E. in October, 2009, he posited that the C.S.M.E. is:

“Far too integral to our national and regional development, not to provide new opportunities for engagement on the complex matter before us. Our Region must adopt new and more meaningful consultative systems on the CSME so that the widest possible involvement is achieved.”

He further stated that the private sector, the labour unions, the wider civil society, Members of Opposition parties and others should be provided with a real avenue to contribute to the development of the C.S.M. E. He was also a strong supporter of the Caribbean Court of Justice.

I have had the privilege of sitting in some of the deliberations where Prime Minister Thompson represented his views, and indeed his country, in the most robust way possible. This was evident in the discussion of the CARICOM Heads of Government meeting in Guyana in July, 2009 when the issue of some of his Government policies became the centre of attention. While there were differences of opinion, those discussions were always conducted with utmost cordiality and respect, traits which are associated with a true statesman.

Prime Minister Thompson's family, Barbados and the wider Caribbean will surely miss this distinguished son, father, husband and Caribbean statesman who was laid to rest yesterday in his beloved Barbados. While he has left us many years too soon, I wish to place on record the recognition by this Hon. House of Prime Minister David Thompson's lifetime achievements as a consummated leader of his country and people who always led from the front, and to offer our deepest condolences to his family and the people of Barbados.

In similar vein, I also wish to pay tribute to His Excellency Dr. Nestor Carlos Kirchner, former President of the Republic of Argentina and Secretary General of the Union of South America who at the time of his sudden death, on October 27th, 2010, was said to be his country most influential politician. Dr. Kirchner served as Argentina 54th President, from May 25th, 2003 to

December 10th, 2007 when he was succeeded by his wife Mrs. Cristina Fernandes Kirchner the current President of that country.

A lawyer by profession, Dr. Kirchner had a long career in politics, serving as Governor of Argentina oil rich province of Patagonia from December, 1991 to May, 2003. He also served as a Mayor of his hometown of Rio Gagarious, from 1987 to 1991. Although little known internationally, and even domestically, Dr. Kirchner assented to the President of Argentina, in May, 2003, by virtue of his rival indo elections withdrawing from the second round of the polls.

As President of Argentina, Dr. Kirchner was widely credited for overseeing the stabilisation of his country's economy at a time when it was struggling to emerge from a devastating financial crisis. Among some of the bold decisions of Dr. Kirchner, which he made as President, was the renegotiation of the terms of a 9.8 billion dollars debt to the International Monetary Fund. He had also been credited for his tackling of poverty and unemployment in Argentina. Following his tenure as President of Argentina, Dr. Kirchner was widely regarded as a distinguished statesman by several of the Heads of State on the South American continent. This led to his nomination and subsequent confirmation as Secretary General to the Union of South America Nations in May 2010.

During his short tenure as Secretary General of UNASUR, and even though not widely publicised until his death, Dr. Kirchner played a vital role in mediating in the diplomatic crisis between Colombia and Venezuela, and in resolving the recent crisis in Ecuador due to an attempted coup in that country. As Guyana prepares to assume the chairmanship of UNASUR, at the end of this month, where it was hoping to have Dr. Kirchner's presence, I wish to place on record the recognition by this Hon. House of his long and distinguished political career, both as President of Argentina and Secretary General of UNASUR, and also to offer our condolences to his family and the people of Argentina. I thank you. [Applause]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Presentation and first reading

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

AMERINDIAN ACT 2006 (COMMENCEMENT) BILL 2010 –Bill No. 20/2010

A Bill intituled:

An Act to validate the commencement of the Amerindian Act 2006.

[Minister of Amerindian Affairs]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

**AFFIRMATION OF THE MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATIONS
2010 – NO. 6 OF 2010**

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly, in accordance to section 98 (3) of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, Chapter 51:02, affirms the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Regulations 2010 – No. 6 of 2010, made under section 98 (3) of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, Chapter 51:02 and published in an Extraordinary Copy of the Official Gazette dated 20th October, 2010.

[Minister of Home Affairs]

Mr. Rohee: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to move the following motion, which has been circulated, which affirms that the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Regulations 2010 - No. 6 of 2010 made under section (98) (3) of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, Chapter 51:02, be considered by the National Assembly. The genesis of this motion rest in a series of consultations which took place, principally speaking, with the taxi services in our country with a view to, first, encouraging them to have their taxis painted in corporate yellow so as to distinguish themselves among other taxis which ply the various road way of our country.

The first consultation on the matter was held between His Excellency the President and the owners of taxi services at the Guyana International Conference Centre. At that meeting it was made known that having solicited a number of recommendations as to what could be done to enhance taxi services in this country, out of five recommendations which were made, the

administration agreed to one. The five recommendations, in the view of the administration, would have placed quite an onerous burden on owners of taxi services. The cost factor would have been tremendous, and for implementing those measures would have taken a considerable length of time. After due considerations, it was agreed that, of the measures which were proposed, the least expensive and the more cost effective measure would be to have taxis or vehicles associated with taxi services be sprayed in a colour which would be to the satisfaction of the taxi services.

Following those consultations, another round of consultations was held at the Ministerial level with the owners of taxi services, and the principle objective of that meeting was to determine the colour in which the vehicles would be sprayed. The meeting took place, and as a result of those consultations, the Taxi Service Association together with others who are not necessarily members of the Association agreed on a colour which met with their satisfaction in which those vehicles would be sprayed. That colour was deemed as the corporate yellow with a specific number in code. Following that meeting, a date was announced, or time frame was announced, by which all the vehicles plying the road as taxi services would be sprayed in this corporate yellow.

After consultations, once again, with the owners of the taxi services it was agreed to convene another meeting with the owners, and at that meeting it was agreed that the timetable would be extended. That meeting which was held, once again, with the President, after some discussions, certain concessions were granted which would ease the burden, so to speak, to facilitate the spraying, in that particular colour, of those vehicles.

What I would like to emphasise at this point, is the consultative process. The consultative process was of great significance and importance. Even the taxi services were high in their praise for the consultations which took place between the administration and themselves.

Why I emphasise this, is because sometimes people would ask, “who took the decision, and where was the decision taken, and why was the decision taken?” The answer to those questions rest in the extensive consultation which took place in order to arrive at the stage which we are at this point in time.

The other point I would like to emphasise, here, is the question which would usually be asked as to what kind of assistance would the administration provide to these services having agreed to the colour in which the vehicles would be sprayed? Because, obviously, this would have a cost implication, and the natural question would be: Would the administration be prepared to provide some form of assistance in order to facilitate the transition from the colours in which those vehicles were sprayed to the colours, or the colour, that was agreed?

2.53 p.m.

The motion before the House, Mr. Speaker, is precisely aimed at addressing this matter. The concession offered by the Administration is to reduce the road traffic license fee to zero for the first ten years. Currently, it is \$4,500. The other concession which the Administration has offered to the owners of taxi services is to reduce to zero for the first ten years, the fitness certificate fee which is currently \$1500. The taxi services that are part of this project will over the next ten years enjoy this concession. There are some other matters that are under consideration that will take some time before they reach the stage of decision making.

Two extensions were granted to taxi services to put themselves in order so that they can benefit from these concessions. The last date agreed to was 31st December, 2010. Only yesterday, to take the process further, myself and my colleague Minister, Mr. Manniram Prashad, met with the owners of taxi services to discuss, with a view to agreeing on a code of ethics or a code of conduct which was produced by the owners of the taxi services in consultation with the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce.

Speaking to many of them, I believe that Guyanese, as a whole, welcome this development. They see it as a positive move by the Administration and taxi services. The population sees the introduction of the yellow cabs as a move to modernise the services sector in the provision of taxi services. Thus, providing a greater comfort level to passengers, insofar, as them using the roads compared to other taxis in the country. I believe that this motion is necessary in order for us to mount these concessions on a legal footing. It is with this in mind that the motion is proposed for adoption by this Hon. House.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, I rise to say seven words, but before I do that I would like to ask both the Ministers of Home Affairs and Public Works and Communications a question: What is

the average lifespan of a taxi which one hundred percent of the time is reconditioned? I want to posit the answer because I know they will refuse to do so. It is significantly less than ten years. Having said that, I now come to my seven words – consultation can work. We support these regulations. I thank you.

Mr. Ramjattan: I take the position of Mrs. Deborah Backer on this matter and state that we, too, support these regulations.

Mr. Prashad: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this motion, but after my colleagues on the other side said seven and five words respectively, I would just like to do away with all of the background information about the reason for choosing the colour yellow. I want to mention that it has worked before with the airport taxi owners and we have seen a significant improvement because of the standards and training we put there in consultation.

Only recently, the Head of the Caribbean Hotel Association came to Guyana and he told me that he came from the airport with a taxi and the driver was extremely courteous. He asked for several pieces of information and this was supplied by the driver. In consultation with the Guyana Taxi Association, which chose the yellow as the colour, the Government of Guyana after meeting with the association and several taxi owners at Office of the President have agreed to implement certain concessions. The following are the fiscal measures we have implemented in support of the national yellow cab programme:

1. The Minister of Finance has issued the Excise Tax Amendment Regulations 2010 which allows a person importing a vehicle for use as a yellow cab to benefit from a 25 % reduction in Excise Tax that would have otherwise been payable. That is, the importer would pay 75 % of the import tax that would have otherwise been payable on the vehicle's importation.
2. The Minister of Home Affairs has issued the Motor Vehicles, Road Traffic Regulations 2010 which provides the road License fee for yellow cab to be reduced to zero for the first 10 years.
3. It provides for the Fitness Certificate Fee on yellow cabs to be reduced to zero for the first 10 years.

However, even though the Fitness Certificate Fee is reduced to zero, owners must comply with fitness regulations and take the vehicle in for fitness inspection. Mr. Speaker, I support this motion.

Mr. Rohee (replying): I am very pleased that we have unanimity on this matter in the House and I think it sends the right signal to our people. I sincerely hope that this type of consensual developments would forebode for future matters of this type. I, therefore, move that the motion be adopted.

Question put and agreed to

Motion carried

Mr. Speaker: We will now have a motion by Mrs. Sheila Holder. I have been advised that there is a request for the motion by Mrs. Sheila Holder to be deferred.

COMMITTEES BUSINESS

MOTION

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE LEGAL PRACTITIONERS AMENDMENT BILL 2009

BE IT RESOLVED;

That this National Assembly adopts the Report of the Special Select Committee on the Legal Practitioners (Amendment) Bill 2009 – Bill No. 45/2009. [*The Minister of Human Services and Social Security*]

Ms. Manickchand: As Chairperson of the Special Select Committee, which considered the Legal Practitioners (Amendment) Bill 2009 – Bill No. 45/2009, it gives me great pleasure to report to this House that the Committee considered this Bill and made its corrections which are contained in this Report. This Bill was published for the first time on 26th November, 2009. It was introduced into the National Assembly and read for the first time on that date also. Consideration of the Bill was adjourned between the 26th November and 21st December, 2009 to allow for further consultation on the Bill. The Bill was read for a second time and debated on 21st

December, 2009 after which it was committed to a Special Select Committee for consideration by that Committee.

At a meeting on 11th March, 2010 the Committee of Selection nominated the following persons to consider this Bill. Those were; The Hon. Charles Ramson, Minister of Legal Affairs, Mr. Manzoor Nadir, Minister of Labour, Ms. Gail Teixeira, (M.P.), Mr. Moses Nagamootoo, (M.P.), Mr. Mohabir Nandlall, (M.P.) and Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj, (M.P.). Those are the Members from the People's Progressive Party Civic (P.P.P./C) benches. The Members from the People's National Congress Reform 1 Guyana (P.N.C.R.-1G.) are Mrs. Clarissa Riehl, Deputy Speaker, Mrs. Deborah Backer, (M.P.), Mr. Basil Williams, (M.P.), Mr. Aubrey Norton (M.P.) and from the Alliance For Change (A.F.C.) Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan (M.P.). The Committee had its first meeting on 8th April, 2010 and elected as its Chairperson the Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Mr. Charles Ramson.

The Hon. Charles Ramson subsequently resigned from this Special Select Committee with effect from 30th April, 2010. On 14th October, 2010 the Committee of Selection elected myself to replace Mr. Charles Ramson on this Committee and on 18th October, 2010 the Special Select Committee met and elected me as Chairperson of the Committee. At that meeting, the Members of the Committee sought to determine what method they would use in determining the way forward on the Bill and how the Bill is to be considered. On that date, there were two views. One was that the Bill having been consulted on before, the Committee should proceed to consider that Bill which was presently before it. Then there was some concern that consultation was not held on and about this Bill and the Committee took a decision to invite the Hon. Rtd. Justice of Appeal, Justice Claudette Singh, who is presently the Project Coordinator of the Justice Sector Reform Project, to tell us the process and procedure by which this Bill came into being.

The Hon. Justice Singh attended a meeting held on 20th October – this was the third meeting of the Committee – and informed us at that meeting that the Bill was drafted, sent to stakeholders including the Guyana Bar Association, the Berbice Bar Association, the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers (G.A.W.L.), the Judiciary as well as to some individual lawyers and firms who they thought might be interested in commenting on this piece of legislation. The Hon. Justice Claudette Singh then told us that the Bill having been circulated, some organisations wrote, some

private lawyers such as Bergette Corbin, a female lawyer at the Bar, Hughes, Fields and Stoby, Cameron and Shepherd and a few other persons had written in their comments on the Bill.

Additionally, we were told by the Hon. Justice Claudette Singh, project coordinator of the Government of Guyana (G.O.G.)/ I.D.B. Justice Improvement Modernisation Project, that the Bar Association had asked for some more time, which they were given, the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers did not respond one way or the other to say whether they agreed or did not agree and the Berbice Bar Association responded to say that they were comfortable with all that was contained in the draft. The Judiciary responded to indicate that they did not think they should be part of the consultation on a Bill that they would later be called upon to interpret so they declined participation in this consultation process and I agree with that decision. The Committee, having been satisfied by Justice Singh's representations to the Committee, decided that consideration of the Bill would be the next step in bringing this Bill into life in our country. The committee proceeded to consider the Legal Practitioners Amendment Bill 2009 – Bill No. 45/2009. Attached to this Report are the Minutes of those meetings, as well as a few appendices, one of which contains all the corrections, deletions, additions, recommendations that were made to the Bill. I move that the National Assembly adopt this Bill and support its adoption so that we can make this very necessary piece of legislation a reality. [Applause]

Mr. B. Williams: The P.N.C.R. would be unable to support the Bill in its present form. Mr. Speaker, you have put a lot into the reformation of the work of the Parliament with the intention of making it a more consultative one and to have consensus in our decision making. There are provisions which impact Parliament and in certain quarters, these provisions and measures are vaunted. I have heard statements that Guyana has the best Parliament in the Region, the most democratic and the like, but I wish to state, categorically, that the system of Special Select Committee is broken. It has not achieved what the framers and designers of that concept had intended. In fact, I applauded the Hon. Member Mr. Rohee who said what was laudable when he was discussing his Bill was the consultative process. In this case, the consultative process looms large also – the lack thereof, that is.

We know that this Bill impacts certain stakeholders and we debated that so I do not have to go into that. There are certain rules in the Standing Orders which speak to the Special Select Committee process. On page 27, if I may respectfully refer you, Mr. Speaker, to clause 57

captioned, “Procedure after Presentation of Report of Sectoral/Special Select Committee. Clause 57 (1) states:

“When a Bill has been referred to a Sectoral or Special Select Committee in accordance with Standing Order No. 54, the Committee may circulate the Bill for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon.”

In other words, it speaks to consultation. Then there is Standing Order 58 – Committal of Bills after Second Reading.

“When a Bill has been read a second time it shall stand committed to a Committee of the whole Assembly, unless the Assembly on motion made commits it to a Select Committee,” as was done in this case.

Standing Order No. 59 – Functions of Committees on Bills. Clause 59 (1) states:

“Any Committee to which a Bill is committed shall not discuss the general merits and principles of the Bill but only its details.”

Clause 59 (2) states:

“Any such Committee shall have power to make such amendments therein as it thinks fit, provided that the amendments, including new clauses and new schedules, are relevant to the subject matter of the Bill.”

We have a regime that tells us how to proceed in the Special Select Committee even after a second reading. Might I now, respectfully, refer this Hon. House to page 45 of the Standing Orders and more particularly, Standing Order 94 – Procedure in Select Committee. Clause 94 (1) states:

“Except as otherwise provided in Standing Orders, this Standing Order shall apply to all Standing and Select Committees”

Standing Order 94 (5) states:

“Unless Standing Orders otherwise direct, a Select Committee may send for persons, papers and records, and shall have leave to report its opinion and observations together with the minutes of the evidence taken before it to the Assembly.”

Again, a provision is made for consultation.

Now, let us examine the process, in this instant, of the Special Select Committee of the Legal Practitioners Amendment Bill. The Hon. Member, Ms. Priya Manickchand, outlined the history of it. One of the things that were said was that there was an adjournment from 26th November to 21st December, 2009 for further consultations. I have not seen that in any Minutes of the Committee and it is the first time we are hearing it on this side of the House. There was never any adjournment for consultation for the simple reason that there was no consultation undertaken under the first Chairman, the Hon. Attorney General, who gave up his position and was replaced by the Hon. Member, who at the very first meeting attempted to railroad and complete this work at the said meeting., but for the objections of the P.N.C.R.–1G. representatives. The A.F.C. had seen it fit from the outset not to take part in the business and deliberations of the Committee.

We are eternal optimists in the P.N.C.R. and we believe that we need to give our colleagues on the other side of the House, the P.P.P/C., an opportunity to reform themselves. We believe in that and we also have a duty to a large component of this society and we also have to do our work. That notwithstanding, when we were deliberating on the way forward within the Committee, we suggested that as a Special Select Committee, we would have original jurisdiction and sitting here doing what we are required to do, we believe that consultations with stakeholders should take place as had been done in other Committees, the other Members on that side in their Committees who had done proper consultative work. We were surprised when this was not accepted. Even though they did not want to send out notices inviting memoranda from stakeholders, if you are saying that there was consultations in 2007 or 2008, supply us with the memoranda from those consultations, let us have a look at it and, maybe, that would be a basis for us to move forward. Even that suggestion was met with resistance.

Let me say this now. I do not know what kind of vicarious consultation that was. What use is it to me and our Members that you are telling us that consultations took place in 2008 and 2007? How are we going to discharge our responsibilities to the people of Guyana by going on some

hearsay consultations which we never partook of? We believe in doing our work properly and we believe in the old fashioned approach to working. We believe that the people should have been brought in after sending out invitations because I read the rules and the Standing Orders make provision for that. As happened in the Committee, the lawyer from ‘the grazing’ was the lawyer who presented the most problem to us trained lawyers.

A proposal was then made to bring the Hon. Justice of Appeal Ms. Claudette Singh for her to inform us of the procedure that she had used when she dealt with the Bill all those years ago. When the Hon. Justice of Appeal appeared, she made a presentation and she indicated that she had sent out invitations to certain people but she never received any memoranda from the Bar Association, she never received from the judiciary. She said that those that she received, she was prepared to make them available to us on the Committee. [Mr. Neendkumar: Who is she?] The Hon. Justice as I had introduced her before. I know that English is a foreign language for the Hon. Member over there. We thought it was pretty good for the Hon. Justice of Appeal to agree to make available all the memoranda from 2007-2008 to us and we were prepared to bend and run with that. But, lo and behold, after the Hon. Justice of Appeal departed, the Hon. Chairperson, Mdm. Manickchand, decided that the Committee would go ahead and go through the Bill line by line. We asked how the Committee could go through the Bill line by line and the memoranda that had been promised were not received. The Government used its majority to railroad the process and so the Hon. Deputy Speaker, Mdm. Riehl, and I saw that there was no profit in continuing to participate in such a non consultative, puerile process for the Chairperson to ram this piece of legislation down the throats of the Guyanese people. In fact, there was no public consultation and the Bill would impact the public. The public has not had an opportunity to address this Bill.

3.23 p.m.

We are against this Bill as we did in the second reading... we have this Bill which is a political mechanism therein to target political opponents. [Interruption]... I went through that already. Do you want me to go through that again? Where you would stay in a room in Robb Street and decide who you do not want to practice this year. I already have three chairs: one for me, one for my wife and one for my son, outside the Office of the President. Election! Election! Election time!

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of the Members speaking on the opposite side are supposed to be very afraid of that Bill. Because I know one who had not been in practice for two weeks displaying awesome purchasing power. So whenever they are ready we are ready.

It would have been an exercise in futility for us to continue to participate in the work of that select committee. As I understand it, the Committee completed its work in one day without receiving a memorandum. Now it is here in the House. That is why I am saying, with respect, the special select process has been broken and it has become a waste of time. The whole essence of the process, that is, one based on consultation, has been eroded, and we would never support this Bill in the present form that it is presented in this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
[Applause]

Mr. Ramjattan: Mr. Speaker, the Alliance for Change will remain consistent with the principle it enunciated at the Second Reading when we had a major debate on this Bill. As we had indicated then, we find that even with all the deliberations and consultations the Hon. Minister mentioned, the offensive Clause still remains. We knew that it was going to be an exercise in futility going in to the Select Committee; that we are not going to get this clause removed. That is exactly the reason why the Alliance for Change, seeing the light largely, did not attend any of the meetings, and we are vindicated because Rule 15 which we had indicated, sub-rule 2 which was snatched into the Code of Conduct- snatched into because it has no bearing on that kind of title.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, may I please object; a point of order. As far as I understand it we are debating the contents of the Report that is presently before this House. I do not understand how Mr. Ramjattan can say from the beginning I never went, because I thought it was a waste of time and then Mr. Ramjattan seeks to speak on the contents of the Bill. I object to that, Sir, and ask you to rule on it.

Mr. Speaker: You are absolutely right Hon. Member, but I couldn't help overhearing your colleagues on this side provoking Members on that side on what objections they have on the Bill. So you must understand.

Ms. Manickchand: The colleagues over here are not standing. These are standing and they are supposed to have better sense. We are all educated on these rules, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, Mr. Ramjattan, we are not dealing with the merits.

Mr. Ramjattan: No, we are not dealing with the merits. The reason why we are here is to state the reason why we did not attend the Select Committee, and why it is also important for the records. We have indicated that the independence of the legal profession is being eroded by this Bill, by virtue of sub-rule 2 of Rule 15 of the Code of Conduct:

“An attorney at law shall not practice as an attorney-at-law unless he has been issued a practice certificate by the Commissioner General.”

So that if the Commissioner General as a member of the Executive branch of Government states “Mr. Ramjattan you shall not have your practice certificate”, he will not practice law. So I, having passed my examinations, getting my law school certificates, a man of good character, come, get admitted before a certain judge and then now Mr Kurshid Sattaur, or whosoever holds the post, says, “your practice certificate shall not be given to you because there is some tax laws or your owe some monies” – not being convicted, by the way, under the tax laws. He declares “I shall not give you your practice certificate”. You then, by virtue of not getting a practice certificate, have committed a misconduct, a misconduct then that debars you from practice. That is the logic and that is why I am saying we find it so offensive. I retain my original position and that is, the Alliance for Change will not support this Bill neither the process in the Select Committee that saw even the Hon. Attorney General having to resign. Thank you very much.
[Applause]

Mr. Nandlall: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak as a Member of the Select Committee on the Report that is before the House. I wish to begin by saying that the Hon. Mr. Ramjattan, who did not attend a single meeting, gave to this National Assembly the excuse that he telegraphed what his contributions would have been- the effect that his contributions would have had in the Select Committee. He said that, according to him, it would have made no difference and therefore he did not participate. That is the excuse proffered to this House for his derogation of his responsibility to his constituency. That is regrettable. We are here in this National Assembly to canvas for and represent the rights and interests of our various constituencies. That is the essence of our responsibility here. We cannot refuse to discharge those responsibilities when they

devolve upon us and then try to excuse our dereliction of responsibility by citing whimsical and capricious reasons.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to address the concerns raised by Mr. Williams. As I understand them, the gravamen of the Hon. Member's concern is that the Bill did not receive proper consultation. Essentially that was his quarrel with the Bill. As a result, I consider it incumbent to trace the evolutionary process that this Bill underwent before it was laid in the National Assembly, so as to give an accurate picture of the consultation from which this Bill benefitted long before it was ever laid in this National Assembly.

It is now common knowledge that the Government established sometime in 2007 the *Justice Improvement Modernisation Programme*. The purpose of that programme was to execute the Government's commitment to this country to bring certain reforms to the justice sector. It was a manifesto promise which we made to the people of this country when we campaigned during the 2006 elections. As soon as elections were over the Government went about to implement its manifesto promises. One of the first things it did was establish that programme as the executing unit for the agenda of the Government in respect of justice sector reforms.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Justice Claudette Singh was appointed coordinator of that programme.

That programme consists of a steering committee. That steering committee is the body that runs and manages that programme. The steering committee is chaired by the Hon. Attorney General, representing not only the Government but the interest of the State Counsel. The Chancellor of the Judiciary sits on that steering committee as well representing the interests of the judiciary and the magistracy. The Director of Public Prosecutions sits on that Committee representing the interests of the State Counsel at the Criminal Bar. The President of the Guyana Bar Association sits on that committee representing the interests of the Private Bar. A representative of the Berbice Bar Association sits on that steering committee representing the interests of the lawyers practicing in Berbice. There we have the steering committee of this entire programme benefitting from the widest possible representative interests and a constituency that is far reaching in the entire spectrum of the legal profession (is represented on that steering committee). And it is out of the bowels of that steering committee that this Bill emanated. So that this Bill was not sprung upon lawyers and the Bar Association. They participated from the very conception of this Bill. It came

out of a committee of which the Bar Association was a constituent member. The impression that is being created here that this Bill was pulled out from some back door is a wrong impression and one I wish to reject for the purpose of the record of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill in its first draft was circulated in May, 2008. At that time it was sent to the judiciary, certain law firms, including your law firm, Cameron and Shepherd. It was also sent to lawyers in Berbice, the Guyana Bar Association, the Guyana Women Lawyer's Association and the Berbice Bar Association. At that time Mr Kashir Khan was the President of the Guyana Bar Association. I spoke with Mr Kashir Khan only last night and he confirmed that he received a copy of this Bill along with seven other Bills. It was about one month before he demitted office along with the then Executive of the Bar Association. Before he passed the Bill over he wrote to the Hon. Attorney General at that time, Mr. Doodnauth Singh, and communicated his comments. In that letter to Mr. Doodnauth Singh he expressed the view that he will pass the Bill over to those who would take office from him and they would proffer their comments.

Mr. Teni Housty and his executive assumed office of the Bar Association Executive sometime in June, 2008. When Mr. Housty assumed office he wrote to Justice Claudette Singh requesting more time for consultation with the wider Bar. This was granted to him.

I have the letter written by Mr. Teni Housty dated 12th June, 2008 in which he requested from Justice Claudette Singh more time to consult with respect not only to this Bill but to seven other Bills which he met when he assumed office. And all required consultation with the Bar as part of the implementation process.

Mr. Speaker, the Bar Association responded. They asked for more time and got more time. And on the 14th June, they made their submissions. But before they made their submissions, I must point out...and I inquired personally and specifically of Mr. Teni Housty as to the consultations which he held. He told me that he put up notices at various conspicuous places in the High Court alerting members of the Bar to the fact that the Bill was in circulation. He circulated the Bill and also sent electronic messages to various members of the Bar soliciting their comments. Those comments were received and chronicled into one document, the Report from the Guyana Bar Association, which was submitted to Justice Singh on 14th August, 2008. From May, 2008 until August, 2008 the Bar Association consulted with its constituent members regarding this Bill. At

the end of that consultation process a written presentation was made to Justice Singh and was numbered eleven pages in length. It contained a very detailed analysis of the Bill along with suggested amendments *et cetera*. It also reviewed various sections of similar legislation in various parts of the Commonwealth Caribbean.

The point I want to make is that the Bill received the fullest consultation of the Guyana Bar Association. In their presentation there is evidence of it, as it is a presentation that spans eleven pages in its written form.

Mr. Speaker, the consultation process also yielded a contribution from Cameron and Shepherd, a five-page contribution. It yielded a contribution from Hughes, Fields and Stoby – I counted the pages. Nine pages of written submission were made by Hughes, Fields and Stoby. Another law firm, Hamilton, Britton and Adams made a submission in writing as well which spans six pages. Ms. Birget Corbin also made a submission. Whether she was required to do so or not of her own volition, she submitted a 3-page presentation. The Berbice Bar Association, according to Justice Singh said they were comfortable with the Bill. The judiciary, which was also consulted, said it would have been improper for them to have been part of the consultative process having regard to their peculiar role as the interpreter of the Bill at some stage when it becomes law. The Guyana Women Lawyers Association was consulted but they did not see it fit to respond. So that when the Hon. Member Mr. Basil Williams can stand here and try to mislead this Hon. National Assembly by saying there was no consultation, I must reject that statement out of hand and say this Bill received consultation.

Mr. Speaker, importantly, according to Justice Claudette Singh, the views and comments which were submitted to her was taken on board and the first draft of the Bill was then changed to incorporate the comments which were made to here in writing. Then the Bill was presented to the National Assembly. So that when this document came to the National Assembly on the 21st November, 2009 it was a document that already benefitted from consultation at the level of the Bar Association and the various persons who were consulted.

When the Bill came to the National Assembly there was an adjournment requested for further consultation and the National Assembly adjourned. I understand that Your Honour was also written to. A further request was made by the Bar Association for consultation in relation to the

Bill. The debate on the Bill was then adjourned until the 21st December- another month for further consultation. It was on the 21st December, that we had a full debate in this House, a debate in which the Opposition P.N.C.R. participated as well as the Alliance for Change.

The consultation did not end there. The Bill was further sent to a Select Committee. Another step, another layer, in consultation was extended in respect of this Bill. This Bill received consultation at various stages and when we went to the Select Committee the position taken by... well of course as I mentioned, Mr. Ramjattan never showed up which was quite regrettable. I know how strong his views are, the consultative process, to which the Select Committee was committed and to which the Bill was committed, would have benefitted largely from the sterling contribution of Mr. Ramjattan. Unfortunately, the process did not benefit from the illuminating brilliance of Mr. Ramjattan. So that we had to contend in the select committee with the absence of Mr. Ramjattan, and we had to contend with the lack of benefit that the Alliance for Change would have made in relation to the Bill. **[Interruption]** Someone is saying that zero minus zero is zero. Be that as it may, Sir, Mr. Ramjattan did not see it fit to represent his constituency, which he so boldly speaks about now, in the Select Committee. We did not benefit from Mr. Ramjattan's interjection and contribution.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Basil Williams and Mrs. Clarissa Riehl took a position that the Bill should go to further consultation. The Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira and I went to great lengths in explaining in the Select Committee the process that the Bill already went through. We had enquired from Mr. Williams whom he wished to consult again. He replied, "The Bar Association." We produced to him the evidence of consultation. We produced to him the various letters that the Bar Association wrote. We produced to him the various contributions which lawyers made to the Bill. Do you know what he told us? He told us that those are hearsay information and he could not act on that. That is the position that that Member took in the select committee. He refused to take into account the documents which the Chairperson circulated to the Committee; the documents of the consultative process and the contributions of the various members. He refused to treat them as authentic and in his own language he said those are hearsay; that he is a lawyer and therefore he could not have regard to those matters. That is the type of mediocrity which people are bringing to this Assembly. When they don't get their way they make wild charges against other people.

Because we are committed to arrive, as far as possible, to a consensual position on this matter, we on the Government side said, 'okay, let us bring Justice Claudette Singh'. Every time we try to explain the consultative process which the Bill benefitted from we were told that that was hearsay information. We therefore decided to bring Justice Claudette Singh who could speak directly on the matter so it will not be hearsay but 'she-say', according to Mr. Bernard DeSantos. As a result Justice Claudette Singh was invited to the Committee, specifically to apprise the Committee of the consultative process this Bill went through. Justice Claudette Singh came and explained in great detail the consultative strata, and the consultative road, that this Bill traversed before it was laid in the National Assembly. She brought with her all the memoranda she received as a result of this consultative process. Those memoranda were distributed to the various Members of the Committee, establishing beyond a doubt that this Bill received the widest possible consultative exercise. When the Hon. Member Mr. Basil Williams realised that the Bill received wide consultation and subjecting it to consultation again would be an exercise in complete futility, he then took a position that his party would not participate in this process unless this Bill went to another stage of consultation. So that everything that Justice Claudette Singh said, and every document Justice Singh brought, and all the other evidence that there was the widest possible consultation, they rejected and took the unreasonable position that unless we went for another stage of consultation they would walk out and not participate. And, they walked out. They did what they have done in this wider Assembly, and what they have done in every other engagement. When they cannot win lawfully and in accordance with the rule they abandon ship and walk out. So the unfortunate result was that the Bill did not benefit from any contribution whatsoever of not only the Alliance for Change but also the People's National Congress Reform.

One would have thought that if the Hon. Member was not getting his way in the Committee and wanted the views of the Bar Association and various lawyers, according to him, who wanted to make contributions, the responsible and the democratic thing to do, was to go out to those people, consult with them, elicit and solicit their views and then come to the committee and try to represent those views and persuade the Government side to make amendments to accommodate the contributions and views of the Bar. But the Hon. Member did not see it fit to do so. What they did was completely abandon their responsibility in the Committee. But that is not democracy Mr. Speaker. The core and quintessence of representative democracy is that we

are here because 750,000 people or 400,000 voters cannot be here. We are here in a 65-member grouping to represent the interest of all those people who voted. That is the principle that they abandoned in the Select Committee. If they could not have gotten the people to come to the National Assembly itself to express their views, they were not prepared to express the views for the people. By a logical extension of that principle they should not even be in the National Assembly, if you are here and un-prepared to represent the interests of the people who put you here to represent their interest, then what are you doing here.

What transpired in the Select Committee was a horrible demonstration or illustration, of the abandonment of responsibility by people who want to be respected as national leaders. And that is the tragedy of what happens in the Select Committee.

What I would like to say in conclusion, is that this Bill received wide consultation, long before it reached this National Assembly. It was delayed in this National Assembly for a further month to accommodate again more consultation.

3.53 p.m.

It was sent to Select Committee for more consultation. Unfortunately, those charged with the responsibility to foster that consultative process abandoned ship, and I speak about Mr. Ramjattan, Mr. Basil Williams, Ms. Clarissa Reihl and Mr. Aubrey Norton who never came. The Bill did not benefit in any manner from the select committee process because those who supposed to have come there to discharge their responsibility did not do so. In conclusion, I have no hesitation whatsoever in commending this Report for the unanimous approval of this House.

Ms. Manickchand (replying): I am going to be very short Mr. Speaker. I believe Mr. Nandlall, Hon. Member, dealt with most of the objections. I would like to point out, repeatedly I come to this National Assembly and hear persons standing here, particularly from the side of the Opposition, and telling blatant untruths that can be verified in Reports of this House.

Mr. Basil Williams stood here this afternoon and told us with a straight face, as he has done before, that they asked for memoranda that the Hon. Justice Singh was presenting from and was alluding to and they never got it. That is what he said here this afternoon.

I refer your Honour to Appendix II of the Report, page 3 of the Minutes of the fourth meeting. That Report says this: this is a document from the Special Select Committee, the professionals who work there, “The following documents were circulated prior to the meeting”, and it lists a set of documents. It says at paragraph 2.2, part three, “copies of memoranda submitted by the Hon. Chief Justice retired Claudette Singh”.

Mr. Basil Williams – we are not allowed to say he was lying –, Mr. Basil Williams was dissembling in this National Assembly as he has done before coming out of committees. That is something we should take strong objection to as a House. Mr. Williams stood here and cited Orders from the Standing Orders and told us that we may consult. These rules I believe were put into the Standing Orders to cater for when consultation was not previously done on a particular piece of legislation or work that is coming to this National Assembly.

Mr. Basil Williams in one fell swoop wants to throw away all that the other members of the Bar have done; throw that aside because it is not important, it did not come from him. Incidentally, it is Mr. Williams who needs to enquire of himself and perhaps his colleagues why it is that Bar does not believe he is a worthy enough person to consult. That is what happened here. Because he was not consulted, they did not go to his house, they did not sit down with him at his breakfast table and ask him exactly what he wanted which I believe he would have been prepared to give at that time; he wants to throw away everything else that the Guyana Bar Association, Hughes Fields and Stoby, Mr. Britton, Cameron and Shepherd and Ms. Bergette Corbin did. He and Mr. Ramjattan want us to ignore all of that; throw it away because the two of them did not utilise the two years they had.

Mr. Ramjattan: I want to make this point clear that I did not object as to consultations. The principle of an Executive Member making who should practice law is what the Alliance for Change made at its objection. All the other clauses of this Bill we support, not that one. So please distinguish me from the P.N.C.

Ms. Manickchand: Mr. Speaker, the Alliance for Change was unrepresented at this Committee. The reasoning given by Mr. Ramjattan – on this floor, it is recorded, and I hope the press is carrying it too – is that he did not believe he could make a difference there, so he just did not show up. Mr. Ramjattan is pursuing the Presidency, he said that Sir. He is going to be

unsuccessful, so he may as well give up now. If that is the argument he is going to use. As far as I understand it. This Committee is supposed to take all of the input from all of its members. Incidentally, of the six members – Mr. Ramjattan is bellowing now; he should have come there and said that – of the ten members, six were lawyers. I would be embarrassed if I were one of them to come here and say I do not know what my own organisation and my colleagues in the Bar Association were doing. I would be ashamed to go there and say that; to say that my own colleagues do not think me worthy enough to ask my opinion on these matters, or to heed it when I go publicly and say it to the newspapers or television or wherever else. That is what we have here.

A more general issue which I think I must speak on, because I have been quite about it too long in the interest of protecting the privacy that is supposed to attend to these meetings at the Select Committee. The P.N.C. has repeatedly come in the person of Mr. Basil Williams, Hon. Member of this House, and said to us “we are working; we do not have time to come here to a select committee meeting. We have a job to do; we have a day job. This here is a hobby”. I do not know that they are telling the people of Guyana this when they are presenting themselves for office, but this is what they come and do, and they are record. These meetings are recorded and the National Assembly has them, and he is on record several times of saying that. He comes here and he puts on his face for the cameras and he says “we want to do our work, and this Committee has original jurisdiction”, in the committee. I invite members of the press to go and see the verbatim records. Repeatedly, on the Sexual Offences Committee, he goes and he says, “we do not have time for this; you have to set it at a time when I can come”, and I have repeatedly bent over backwards as chairperson and said that I will have this Committee meeting at 5 o’clock, 6 o’clock, Saturday, Sunday, whenever you can make it we will have it and this still failed to show up, which just tells me something; they have no interest in representing the people of Guyana on this Committee or perhaps they have no contribution to the meetings. This is something that is repeated; check the absences of the Opposition. These Opposition Members, the Hon. people that they are, that stand up here and say that they want these Bills to go to select committee, Hon. Member Khemraj Ramjattan, , being one, on this particular Bill and then does not have the decency to show up and have his opinion recorded.

The other matter I wish to bring to this Assembly's attention and to the public's attention is that at these meetings we have people speaking from two sides of the mouth. Last week Mrs. Clarissa Riehl, Deputy Speaker of this Hon. House, stood up here on the two other Bills that we spoke of, and we recorded it, Minister Nadir and I, and the Hon. Member said "We approved this Bill and we applauded it and we are going to support it. What took them so long? Why is the P.P.P. taking so long to bring legislation?" Then, we go to these meetings at the select committee and the P.N.C. does not bother to show up. It is the P.N.C. particularly who try to prolong and delay and get adjournments simply because they did not read it. They did not work for it, so they want us the Government of Guyana, P.P.P./Civic, who swore to look after people's interest, and who are going to be true to their promises, want us to sit back and wait on them. This is a specific example, Mrs. Latchmin Punalall from the A.F.C. will tell you along with the other P.P.P./Civic Members, that during the Sexual Offences Committee – I am using this as an example – we were finished with this Bill in December. As pursuant to a letter written by Mr. Williams we extended the period. We had protests here; we had protests in front of Office of the President; Newspapers carried it, and never once did the P.N.C. stand up and say "we asked that this be delayed". Never once did Mr. Williams the Hon. Member stand up and say "we asked that this be delayed". I am thinking that this thing here where Mr. Williams and the P.N.C. and the A.F.C. comes specifically to delay the work of a committee on a Bill is so that they can go into the public and do their mischief and tell the people of Guyana that it is the P.P.P./Civic not working.

Mr. Murray: A point of order Sir. Is it in order that this Member uses a specific experience in a particular Special Select Committee to generalise about the attendance of P.N.C.R. Members as Special Select Committees in general, when there is no evidence to that effect in respect to the other committees? Could she please confine her remarks, to this committee?

Ms. Manickchand: Mr. Speaker it is my view that based on previous experience I have had with Members of the Opposition, particularly the P.N.C.R., that it is a deliberate effort to delay the work of this National Assembly and particularly the work of the Select Committee and then to lay the blame at the door of the P.P.P./C. We have wized up, and we are not going to be bending over backwards to cater for you. We will cater as far as we can for consultation and for you to contribute at these Select Committees, but we are not going to delay the work of the people of Guyana any longer.

Mr. Murray: Sir, could I ask on a point of order that the Member be prevented from referring to specific committees in general, when we are dealing here with a specific Special Select Committee, especially since he has produced no evidence to this National Assembly about the behaviour of P.N.C.R. Members of other Select Committees.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member could you confine yourself to the matter before us today.

Ms. Manickchand: Mr. Speaker, it is this matter that I speak of.

Mr. Speaker: I am asking you to confine yourself, Hon. Member, to the matter before us. I think you have made your point very well Hon. Member. You can leave this point now and...

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am not withdrawing it, I am just moving on. As a result of which we have had wide consultation; consideration of the Bill is completed. Attached to this Report is an Appendix that outlines exactly what changes were made in this piece of legislation, and I ask on behalf of the Special Select Committee that this House do adopt the report of the Special Select Committee on the Legal Practitioners Amendment Bill, Bill No. 45 of 2009.

Before I sit, I believe I am done here, I wish to express happy Diwali greeting to all of my colleagues in this Hon. House and to all the people of Guyana.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I put the motion to adopt the Report of the Special Select Committee on the Legal Practitioners Amendment Bill.

Motion put and agreed to

Motion carried.

Hon. Minister would you be kind enough to move the third reading of the Bill please.

Mr. Ramson: If it pleases you Cde. Speaker, as the Minister responsible for the introduction of this Bill, I ask that the Bill be read a third time and passed as indicated in the Report.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members the question is that the Bill be read a third time and passed; those in favour say 'aye', those against say 'no'. The 'aye's have it. Let the Bill be read a third time please.

Bill read a third time

Hon. Members, this is that last item on the agenda, and this brings us to the end of our business for today. I would like to take this opportunity to wish all members of the House a happy Diwali and a pleasant and fruitful weekend. Thank you very much.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, permit me to move that the House be adjourned to Thursday the 11th of November. While I am on my feet Sir, with your permission, permit me also to extend to you and your family and to all of my colleagues in this Hon. Houses and their families, happy Dewali Greetings. Indeed, on behalf of all the Members of this House, permit me to extend through you happy Dewali greetings to the people of Guyana.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, would you kindly permit me on behalf of the People's National Congress Reform, to extend also sincerest best wishes for a happy Dewali to all Hon. Members of this National Assembly, the staff of the National Assembly, to the Members of the Media both present and absent. On this occasion, that is Dewali, we are provided with an opportunity to convert darkness into light. I trust that sometime in the National Assembly, we can clear our path to remove the darkness that seems to lie ahead of us and to convert it into light; with that, happy Dewali to all and everyone.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could I please make a Dewali greeting to one and all of the staff of this National Assembly and the people out there. A Happy Dewali to one and all.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Members. The National Assembly will stand adjourned until November 11th.

Adjourned accordingly at 4.23 p.m.