

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 2]

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIRST
PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA.

10th Sitting

Wednesday, 30th August, 1967

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

[The Assembly met at 2 p.m.]

Prayers

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

His Honour the Deputy Speaker, Mr. R. C. Tello.

Members of the Government

Ministers

The Honourable L. F. S. Burnham, Q.C.,
Prime Minister

Dr. the Honourable P. A. Reid,
Minister of Trade

The Honourable N. J. Bissember,
Minister for Parliamentary Affairs (Leader of the House)

The Honourable R. E. Cheeks,
Minister of Local Government

The Honourable E. F. Correia,
Minister of Communications

The Honourable Mrs. W. Gaskin,
Minister of Education

The Honourable C. M. L. John,
Minister of Home Affairs

The Honourable R. J. Jordan,
Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources

The Honourable W. O. R. Kendall, C.B.E., J.P.,
Minister of Health and Housing

The Honourable C. A. Merriman, J.P.,
Minister of Labour and Social Security

The Honourable M. F. Singh,
Minister of Works and Hydraulics

The Honourable M. W. Carter,
Minister of Information

Parliamentary Secretaries

Mr. D. B. DeGroot,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister

Mr. G. Bowman,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Mr. O. E. Clarke,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education

Mr. P. Duncan,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Local Government

Mr. J. G. Joaquin, O.B.E., J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works and Hydraulics

Mr. C.V. Too-Chung,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance

Other Members

Mr. W. A. Blair

Mr. J. Budhoo

Mr. M. Kasim

Mr. R. G. B. Field-Ridley

Mr. D. Mahraj

Mr. H. Prashad, J.P.

Mr. T. A. Sancho

Mr. J. H. Thomas

Rev. A. B. Trotman

Mr. H. M. S. Wharton, J.P.

Members of the Opposition

Dr. C. B. Jagan,
Leader of the Opposition

Mr. B. H. Benn

Mr. Ram Karran

Mr. R. Chandisingh

Mr. H. J. M. Hubbard

Dr. Charles Jacob, Jr.

Mr. C.V. Nunes

Mr. E. M. G. Wilson

Mr. M. Hamid, J.P.

Mr. D. C. Jagan

Mr. H. Lall

Mr. Mooner Khan, J.P.
Mr. Y. Ally
Mr. L. Linde
Mr. R. D. Persaud, J.P.
Dr. S. A. Ramjohn

Clerk of the National Assembly — Mr. F. A. Narain
Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly — Mr. M. B. Henry

Abaynt

The Honourable P. S. d'Aguiar,
Minister of Finance — *on leave*
The Honourable S. S. Ramphal, C.M.G., Q.C.
Attorney-General and Minister of State
Mr. W. G. Carrington — *on leave*
Mr. A. Chase
Dr. F. H. W. Ramsahoye
Mr. J. R. S. Luck
Mr. M. N. Poonai
Mr. E. M. Stoby
Mr. S. M. Saffee
Mr. M. Bhagwan

**PUBLIC BUSINESS
MOTION
AWARD OF HONOURS**

“Whereas Guyana is now a politically independent State.

And whereas this new status is incompatible with the acceptance by citizens of Guyana of the award of imperial honours;

And whereas precedent exists within the Commonwealth whereby member nations, be they republics or otherwise, do not recommend their citizens for such foreign awards;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Government of Guyana cease making recommendations to Her Britannic Majesty for the grant of such awards:

And be it further resolved that recommendations, if any, already made for the grant of such awards be immediately withdrawn:

And be it further resolved that official recognition of such awards do cease forthwith:

And be it further resolved that the Government set up without delay a National Committee, representative as far as possible of all interests in the community, to consider and make recommendations for the award by the State of appropriate honours to Guyanese nationals who merit recognition for distinguished service to the nation or for outstanding contributions to the arts and sciences.” [Leader of the Opposition.]

The Minister for Parliamentary Affairs (Leader of the House) (Mr. Bissember): Before we commence I wish to inform the House that there was an agreement between myself and the Leader of the Opposition that item No. 2 on the Order Paper should be proceeded with first.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion, by leave deferred.

**COMMITTEE AND
THIRD READING**

**BILL —
OMBUDSMAN BILL**

The Assembly resumed consideration of the following Bill:

A Bill intituled:

An Act to make provision for matters supplementary and ancillary to those provided for by part 2 of Chapter V of the Constitution of Guyana.” [The Prime Minister]

Assembly in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 5 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 6.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Burnham): I beg to move that the proviso following Clause 6(a) be amended by the insertion of the words “the provisions” between the words “or” and “of” in the sixth line. If this Amendment were to be passed, the line would now read:

“... purpose of executing any of the said provisions or the provisions of subsection (4)...”

Mr. Hubbard: Is this the same Amendment that has been circulated?

The Chairman: Yes. From what I have here it is the same Amendment.

Mr. Ram Karran: I just want to make the observation that this Bill was published a long time ago. It was published in the *Official Gazette* on the 29th July, 1967. The highly-paid Attorney-General was here yesterday. He stood up there and read his speech. It was a prepared speech and not a word was said about this Amendment. The Government does not seem to be able to make up its mind because here it is, at the last minute, seeking to insert an Amendment. The substantive Speaker before you, sir, had warned the Government not to come back with that sort of business. The Prime Minister had explained the meaning of Clause 6. What is the reason for this insertion?

The Prime Minister: I must apologise for assuming literacy and intellectuality on the part of the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran. But the purpose of this is to improve the accuracy and elegance of the Clause.

Mr. Hubbard: The Prime Minister's explanation further condemns the Attorney-General. We have never paid the money that we are paying today for an Attorney-General. All that we have done is to buy a "face" at \$4,000 a month to go around the world.

2.20 p.m.

Amendment put, and agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 7 to 13, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule.

Mr. Ram Karran: I beg to move the Amendment standing in my name. Despite the assurance given yesterday by the Prime Minister that he would consult with the Ombudsman to ascertain whether his office can service the Statutory Boards or Corporations mentioned in the Amendment we on this side of the House think that they should be included now. If it is found that the Ombudsman cannot service them for the next two months then provision should be made very quickly to ensure that after that period they are serviced by the Ombudsman.

It is useless to mention again the Report submitted by the Ombudsman. It is useless to repeat the observations which I made yesterday. I think you, sir, and every reasonable person would recognise that the volume of work done by him is something to be ashamed of. Twenty or twenty-five cases were investigated. Any second-rate lawyer would be able to represent that number of persons before a Court and to get judgement, but for us to pay a man the salary of a judge and for him to sit down and tell us he is going to investigate twenty-four or thirty cases in a year smacks of the worst type of — It is difficult to find words to describe the type.

The only thing that seems to have come out of this Report is that letters were not delivered and the Ombudsman wasted his precious time and the taxpayers' money. Let

him stop dealing with the delivery of letters and stop investigating whether a Department replied to letters and that sort of thing and let him get down to real business. There are hundreds of people who are physically robbed because of the attitude of certain corporations, the Rice Development Company, the Rice Marketing Board, the Guyana Electricity Corporation. I should like to see the highly-paid Ombudsman getting down to the business of investigating some of the complaints against these Boards and Corporations rather than limiting himself to ascertaining what letters are delivered.

I referred to a case yesterday, a very serious case, and the hon. Gentleman, the Attorney-General, said he had consultations with the Canadian High Commissioner as to whether a complaint was made. The suggestion I had made was that the Commissioner had complained to the Prime Minister. Well, if people wish to confuse the issue, it is a question for them, but I do wish to take this opportunity to repeat that the allegation is correct.

But, suppose it had been the case of an individual who owns a telephone, not the Canadian High Commissioner, and he had gone to make a complaint, because one's ears are sensitive to know whether one's telephone is tapped or not. Suppose one went to make a complaint. It would be absolutely impossible for him to get any redress in any Court of Law as the Prime Minister was telling us yesterday. The only way our existing provisions allow for this man to get some redress is for him to go to the Ombudsman.

I wish to ask the Prime Minister, if he has nothing to hide — there is a lot to hide in the case of the Canadian High Commissioner. No wonder it did not appear in the Press at all! No wonder! The hon. Attorney-General got up there and protested that this thing did not happen. Not a word in the Press! They don't want to offend the Canadians. All right, but let us say I wish to make a complaint that my telephone is tapped.

Where do I go? Do I go to the High Court or do I go to the Prime Minister, or do I go to the Security Chief? I do not care if they listen to the conversations of young children doing their homework over the telephone. This is a very serious thing. *[Interruption.]*

The Ombudsman, I think, should be called upon to do some work. He is robbing the taxpayers. He is, I repeat, drawing a large salary. Let us take the case of the Milk Pasteurisation Plant and the Marketing Corporation. Before Mr. Peterson left this country —

The Prime Minister: To a point of order. My hon. Friend is not speaking on the Amendment at all, because the Milk Pasteurisation Plant comes under the Guyana Marketing Corporation which is not the subject matter of the Amendment.

Mr. Ram Karran: The hon. Prime Minister seems to be falling asleep. The Milk Pasteurisation Plant is under the Guyana Marketing Corporation.

The Prime Minister: That is what I said. It does not appear in this Amendment.

The Chairman: I will excuse the hon. Member because I had intended to invoke Standing Order 51(3) (e) to discuss both of these Amendments together. Let us forgive him for it.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Ram Karran: Thank you, sir. At the Milk Pasteurisation Plant, before Mr. Peterson left, four employees were laid off because the Board was operating efficiently without those four persons. Of course the Government used its position to ensure that some of the people who were retrenched were paid and some were not paid. *[Mr. Merriman: "That is most dishonest."]* The records will show that not a month after Mr. Peterson had left this country, all of these people — and they were people of different shades in this case — were brought back to add to the losses and the incompetence at the Milk Pasteurisation Plant.

A Government supporter who would have liked to see the efficiency of the Plant maintained without a drag, without surplus personnel, perhaps would have liked to go to the Ombudsman to complain. It would have been utterly useless for that person to have gone to the hon. Minister of Labour and Social Security (Mr. Merriman). I am sure you will agree with me that the best place for an exercise of that kind is the office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman should have been permitted, under the law, to look into matters of this nature.

I seriously ask the Government to consider the Amendments that are offered and think in the interest of the whole community and also in the interest of the Office of Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman sits and holds a sinecure, as he does now, and draws pay under false pretences — even though it is covered by law — it will be doing the institution of the Government a great deal of harm and it will take a long time for the nation to accept an institution such as this as something worthwhile.

It is in the interest of those things I sincerely ask the Government not to bother to come back next year and put secretly, without passage in this house, additions to the Schedule. Let us do it now. We know that the Ombudsman has only recently got an office but let us put all the corporations on this Schedule and the Ombudsman would do whatever he could with the office staff available to him.

Mr. Khan: I beg to move an Amendment to the Schedule. The Amendment is for the insertion of the following under Drainage and Irrigation Board:

"Guyana Marketing Corporation
Guyana Telecommunication Corporation."

Yesterday the Prime Minister gave the assurance that he would speak to the Ombudsman to see whether these two areas could properly be included in the Schedule. I recognize that, under Clause 13, the Government has the power to amend the Schedule and add any authority which it so

[MR. KHAN]

desires. I should like to urge the hon. Prime Minister to accept the Amendment since, at the moment, there is a very great deal of dissatisfaction in these areas.

The hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran has proposed that other areas be included in the Schedule. I too feel that there is sufficient reason for the inclusion of the Guyana Marketing Corporation and the Guyana Telecommunication Corporation in the Schedule. The Guyana Marketing Corporation, as we all know, has been created in an effort to increase agricultural production.

During the past few years there has been a great deal of dissatisfaction. Farmers have complained time and again without obtaining any redress and, since the Government has placed emphasis on increasing food production, it might be helpful if this area is included in the Ombudsman's jurisdiction so that at least the farmers will have an opportunity for redress. It might also help to stimulate production and lessen the degree of dissatisfaction which exists.

The Guyana Telecommunication Corporation has been created very recently and already there is a great deal of dissatisfaction among the employees there. Recently, there was a release by the Berbice Chamber of Commerce but the Corporation has denied that this dissatisfaction exists. Perhaps it might be a good thing for the Ombudsman's authority to be enlarged to include this body as well so that better relations may exist within the Corporation, between the public and the Corporation, and it will help the Corporation to get on its feet very early.

I therefore urge the Prime Minister to accept the Amendment and include these Corporations in the Schedule. It is true that this Parliament has been given an assurance, but we have been given many assurances that have not been fulfilled. I remember that the Prime Minister gave assurances on two

occasions: one has been fulfilled but the other has not been fulfilled and it is almost a year since that assurance was given. I would not like this to happen in this case. It would not be appropriate for me to go into the details of the second assurance but the Prime Minister will remember this and I urge him to accept the Amendment.

2.40 p.m.

Mr. Wilson: In supporting the Amendment, I just wish to draw attention to a particular authority which I do not think was included here. I am referring to the National Aid Board where, I think, discrimination is very rife. I am saying this in order to draw the Minister's attention to it so that he may look into the functions of the Board carefully, otherwise there are many cases which will go to the Ombudsman. If we were to ask about the racial origin of the people who receive aid, the answer would be revealing. I am particularly interested in this work.

The Chairman: I shall first put the Amendment by Mr. Ram Karran that the following be inserted in the Schedule on page 5 under "Drainage and Irrigation Board":

"Guyana Rice Marketing Board
Guyana Rice Development Company
Guyana Development Corporation
Guyana Electricity Corporation."
Amendment put, and negatived.

The Chairman: I shall now put the Amendment by Mr. Khan that the following be inserted in the Schedule on page 5 under "Drainage and Irrigation Board":

"Guyana Marketing Corporation
Guyana Telecommunication Corporation."
Amendment put, and negatived.

Schedule agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported with an amendment to Clause 6; as amended, considered; read the Third time and passed.

MOTION AWARD OF HONOURS

“Whereas Guyana is now a politically independent State;

And whereas this new status is incompatible with the acceptance by citizens of Guyana of the award of imperial honours;

And whereas precedent exists within the Commonwealth whereby member nations, be they republics or otherwise, do not recommend their citizens for such foreign awards:

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Government of Guyana cease making recommendations to Her Britannic Majesty for the grant of such awards:

And be it further resolved that recommendations, if any, already made for the grant of such awards be immediately withdrawn:

And be it further resolved that official recognition of such awards do cease forthwith:

And be it further resolved that the Government set up without delay a National committee, representative as far as possible of all interests in the community, to consider and make recommendations for the award by the State of appropriate honours to Guyanese nationals who merit recognition for distinguished service to the nation or for outstanding contributions to the arts and sciences.”

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Jagan): The award of honours by Her Britannic Majesty has always been a matter of concern to me and my Party. In many parts of the world, during colonial days particularly, one found that in the majority of cases these honours were mainly used for the purpose of dividing and ruling, of bribing and corrupting and ruling. At one time, the Indian Congress Party ruled that all who had such awards should renounce them. The famous poet, Rabindranath Tagore, because of British brutality in the Punjab when the Punjabis, who were in a passive demonstration calling for the Independence of their country, were fired upon, gave up his Knighthood and this was followed by the Congress Party denouncing and renouncing all such honours.

We have seen in our country in colonial times that these awards were given to some of the most reactionary elements, conservative to the bone, who defended and propped up colonialism. It was a way of life to work for these honours – men serving colonialism. Today, Guyana is a politically independent country and the time has come for us to clean up the cupboards. Indeed, the major Party of the Coalition has set up a Decolonisation Institute and it would seem that while it is considering economic matters, questions of personnel, attitudes and so forth, it should also give consideration to this question which I have set out in this Motion.

In this Motion, I have asked the House firstly, to request the Government to cease making recommendations to Her Britannic Majesty for the granting of such awards in the future; secondly, that if recommendations have already been made for the grant of such awards, that these should be withdrawn; thirdly, that official recognition of such awards cease forthwith; and fourthly, that a committee, representative of all interests in the community, should be set up, a controlling national body, to consider and to make recommendations for the award by the State of Guyana of appropriate awards to Guyanese citizens, and indeed, to others who may serve as well. The time has come when, even in the United Kingdom, some of these anachronisms are dying out.

2.50 p.m.

We have seen in the post-independence period in some of the Commonwealth countries that they have also taken this step of abolishing this practice. They now give their own awards and the basis of selection is now put on a different footing. They give awards to people who distinguish themselves in arts, literature, labour and so on. More and more recognition is given to these types of persons, not to those who stooge. We have seen in socialist countries, for instance, that the ordinary people, the workers are given

[DR. JAGAN]

medals; they are made heroes, the States recognise them, the people recognize them.

This Government is placing a great deal of emphasis on productivity. The T.U.C. is talking a great deal about productivity. Well, whatever goals the Government and the community aspire to could then be taken into consideration and suitable awards could be made to those who have made accomplishments in the various fields. On this question, I do not think there should be much doubt and hesitation on the part of the Government. This is a national question. While we differ, and differ very sharply, on such questions as economic policy, trade policy or fiscal policy, on this question, which is a national one, I do not think there should be any disagreement and division. Therefore, I do not want to speak any longer to delay the business of this House. I urge hon. Members to support this measure which I have moved in the form of the motion tabled under my name .

Mr. Persaud: I rise to second the Motion. When I was a little boy, I tried to find out the meaning of these Awards and I was told that M.B.E. meant "Member, Bookers Estate", O.B.E. meant "Obedient Boys of the British Empire" and when I tried to find out the meaning of C.B.E., if I were to repeat what I was told, I would be thrown out for using unparliamentary language.

Many years ago in this country many people were of the opinion that these awards were not given to people who have genuine and sincere service to this country. These awards were like a bait to gear people for the colonial way of life. Even today we see that awards are given to a number of people who are known to be reactionary to progress in Guyana, people who have given service to nobody else but themselves. If we sit here as Parliamentarians and we do not put a stop to this, then we will not be working towards Guyanese consciousness.

To my mind, the retention of the Honours List will prevent people from

taking a stand in the country, they will not want to contradict those who are in a position to recommend them for such awards. They will not want to say anything against those who make recommendations for the awards. This is the time when people must speak out fearlessly. This is the time when we must have people fighting sincerely to build the nation, and we can only do this if we have people serving without looking for the fruits of their services. The removal of the Honours list will be a step towards building patriotic consciousness in Guyana.

In this country today there are many people who are holding on to the old colonial customs and traditions. At many functions, including State functions, persons are still being discriminated against because, although Guyana has attained her Independence, those who are in command of State functions still hold on to the colonial tradition and customs. This should be a warning to those persons in this country who are carrying out colonial traditions and customs.

I would wish to see — perhaps I may do it — a Motion brought to this Parliament for the removal of the jacket so that we can be comfortable in this tropical country. This is a hot country. Members suffer within the walls of Parliament and it is for this reason that they have to go outside during the course of a debate. This is a tradition and it is not really in keeping with the climate in this part of the world. Therefore, while I support the Motion for the removal of the awards, I also call for other changes which will give us a genuine Guyanese stamp, which will give us the stamp of a free nation.

3 p.m.

Canada, a country that is closely associated with Britain, saw fit to abolish colonial awards some two years ago. The Motion was moved in the Canadian Parliament by the Opposition Leader, Mr. Diefenbaker, and if Canada has seen fit to throw out colonial awards I fail to see why

there should be any controversy in our Parliament on this Motion. I should like to feel that the Government has placed this Motion on the Order Paper because it is the intention of members of the Government to support it.

The Leader of the Opposition has referred to Sir Rabindranath Tagore, who during the Punjab massacre gave up his knighthood. There have been many other persons like him. In this country a Guyanese gave up his award. I therefore urge members of this Government to accept this Motion. It is a Motion that will prepare the way for a genuinely free nation. It is a Motion which will give Guyanese the feeling that in Parliament there is evidence of the building of a truly Guyanese nation. A rejection of this Motion, however, will convince all that a Guyanese consciousness is far away.

I have tried to find out why some people received honours. I was told at the Kitty Market that one man, Joaquin, received his award for "joking". We would wish to see the day when Guyanese who have given services in all sections of the community will have their services recognised by the head of the state and we would wish to see the head of state appoint a committee comprising all sections of the Guyanese community to consider for awards persons who are serving in various fields.

I commend the Motion to members of the Government and urge them to support it.

Mr. Wilson: I should like to take up the point made by the Leader of the Opposition when he said that this Motion has a national concept and there should be no controversy at all about it. I think that members of the Government should seize the opportunity to prove themselves to be truly nationalists.

Let us look at some of these honours. There is the M.B.E., Member of the British Empire, the O.B.E., Officer of the British Empire, the C.B.E., Commander of the British Empire, the K.B.E. Knight Commander of the British Empire. What does the word "Empire" connote? It

connotes domination, exploitation. Why is it that the word "Commonwealth" has been substituted for the words "British Empire?" It is because the word "Empire" is objectionable. If no other type of honour is denounced, at least those with the words "British Empire" should be denounced. Are we members of the British Empire? Do we accept it? We say that we are members of the British Commonwealth, which has a more liberal connotation. It removes the idea of exploitation. We are no longer colonies. If nothing else, I think the Government should agree that honours which have the words "British Empire" in them should immediately be renounced.

Let us give our honours to those who carry on the struggle for the people. I do not wish to make points that other Members have made or will make. I merely want to bring out this point about the "British Empire". I am sure all hon. Members will agree that we are not in the British Empire any more and we should get rid of this term as quickly as possible. We should also deal with renouncing honours. We should have nothing more to do with them; their very expressions are objectionable.

We have heard a great deal from the P.N.C. about the Institute for Decolonisation. How are we going to decolonise ourselves if we do not accept the necessity for giving up this sort of tradition? I can rest assured that we are going to have the support of the Government benches for this Motion, which is nationalistic in objective.

Mr. Bhagwan: Sir, the intention of the Motion is certainly progressive, but I think we must consider the question of awards from a more profound point of view. It is not enough to merely make a suggestion for a change from C.M.G. to G.G.G. or anything else that has a national connotation. I think greater problems are to be confronted. These awards are of extreme importance to the nation and should not be taken lightly. If it was a matter of changing the name or the

[MR. BHAGWAN]

origin of awards, then we would not be dealing with a subject of great importance.

Awards represent one element in the amalgamation of culture in the nation. It is in that respect that one must consider the value of awards that are given by a country to its people. When we look at it from that standpoint we have to consider the whole system as it is operated, whether the pattern has been set by the British, whether the type of award that is given, the circumstances in which awards are given and the criteria used for giving them are now appropriate. If we are intending to change any part of this system, or the whole of it, what do we put in its place?

I think the hon. Mover of the Motion will agree that we need a bit of clarification to make the Motion clearer and perhaps he will clarify it when he replies. All of us, I think will agree that there are certain exceptions — I am talking of substance, not of form. For example, the awards that are given to the legal profession are of great value and so are the awards given to people for literature or science. What we have to do, I think, is to make these awards generally acceptable to the community as a whole so that we would not have the very hypocritical basis on which we now exist. Awards like C.M.G., O.B.E. and the rest of them that have no real substance are given to “the boys” and make the whole system of awards a mockery.

3.10 p.m.

The mass of people as a whole do not even think about them. They do not know what they mean in terms of immediate value to their welfare. What places do these people have in their society? What contribution have they made to their society? There are many awards that cannot be described, even though the British have given them. We must admit that there are certain instances where the British have made certain awards. Many Social Welfare Officers and men in different

fields have received certain awards. What must happen to those awards?

One Resolve Clause in the Motion states:

“And be it further resolved:

That official recognition of such awards do cease forthwith.”

Certainly, there must be some consideration of the consequence of renunciation of all awards. What will be the position of those people who may have deserved their awards? What I should like the mover of the Motion to do is to explain in some detail what will happen in certain specific cases, and not merely talk about the general principle, because the Motion does not make a specific suggestion.

Another factor ought to be taken into consideration. Awards are usually meaningless in a society which has not yet arrived at a coherent and all-embracing unity, where the person who has been fortunate to get an award is something more than a mere recipient of a title, but rather to his nation he must be a symbolism of great effort, discipline, intelligence or contribution.

The huge problem we have in this country is that we have separate cultures, each in its own tributary, moving away from the centre. For example, the hon. Member Mr. Persaud has just spoken as a representative of one section of the community — the Hindu section. What really is the policy of the Maha Sabha as regards the question of awards? Is the Maha Sabha, for example, bringing the Indian community into the nation, or taking it away?

Mr. Persaud: On a point of order. We are debating a specific Motion relating to awards and it has nothing to do with the Maha Sabha.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have not heard the point of order. What is the point of order?

Mr. Persaud: The Member is not speaking on the substantive Motion before the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This is one of those occasions when you can give a bit of liberty.

Mr. Bhagwan: It is clear that I am speaking far above the head of the hon. Member. [Mr. Persaud: "Above your own head."] What is the role of an organisation like Ascria? What is the role of all these cultural organisations? What does it mean to change the award of C.M.G. to some award with a Guyanese connotation when you have in the community many organisations that are drawing the nation apart, splitting it into little groups culturally, politically or otherwise? If you give an award with a Guyanese connotation what will be the significance of it? Will it be accepted by all these organisations? Will we recognise that a man who gets an award deserves the respect of the whole society, or will we look at him as being merely one of the fortunate henchmen of some political party or some such group? Unless politicians look at these things from a far more profound position, Motions like this one would have no meaning whatsoever.

Let us outline clearly the functions of all these various organisations, particularly cultural organisations, so that when an award is given it becomes a national award. Therefore, the act of setting up a National Committee will become redundant. The final Resolve Clause states;

"And be it further resolved: That the Government set up without delay a National Committee, representative as far as possible of all interests in the community, to consider and make recommendations for the award by the State of appropriate honours to Guyanese nationals who merit recognition for distinguished service to the nation or for outstanding contributions to the arts and sciences."

Is the hon. Mover saying that this is the Committee that will be making the awards or is he saying that this is the Committee that will go into the question of setting up an entirely new system? If the latter is the case, then it has my whole-hearted support. What is misleading is that it does not make reference to the procedure, the system, I will ask the hon. Mover to state precisely how

the Committee will function so that we can have a fairly good idea of what is intended.

I think we are all in full agreement with the mover in his analysis of the basis of the previous system. We are aware of the fact that awards have been part of the spoils system of the British Imperial Court. We are aware of the fact that awards have been part of the system of class snobbery where you take out a few people from the community, set them out in high esteem in terms of title and awards, thereby separating them from the masses, even though those awards are given for service to the imperial Government. I would suggest, therefore, that we get down to the task of changing this entire system.

3.20 p.m.

Dr. Jacob: Frankly, I do not think there is any need for me to speak on the Motion. I should have thought that there would have been an immediate stop to the recommendations to the British Monarch for people in independent Guyana. I think the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, since that territory became independent, has made no recommendations for such awards. [The Prime Minister: "That is not so — Ellis-Clarke."]

It seems to us on this side of the House that to continue to allow Guyanese to receive these honours smacks of colonial mentality and we should take all steps to sever links with the British Crown as far as the Honours List is concerned. The republican status to which this country aspires will make the acceptance of such honours even more objectionable. This system of Imperial honours was devised by the British ruling class for a large number of purposes.

It would take a lot of my time to deal with each of these honours, but each one is associated with the economic status of the capitalist class in England and it was also useful as a means of paying out to the protectors of the *status quo*, that is, to

[DR. JACOBI]

persons who maintained the capitalist system and the stratification of the society.

The question will now arise this year: "Why was all of this necessary? To answer this question we must think of the composition of the British State and so discover in whose interest the British State functions. We shall be able to discover, in this examination, what are the political and economic motives of Imperial honours. These awards are made not only to citizens of the British State but to citizens living outside.

I wish it to be understood that I am not criticising the award of Imperial honours for purposes such as to honour those who make contributions to the progress of mankind. I see nothing wrong in honouring the discoverer of penicillin or the lone yachtsman, who sailed around the world recently. But I am against the awards for what is euphemistically called "public service."

As I have said, one has to look at how the British State is composed. It is an elaborate system consisting of the Cabinet, the Civil Service, the police, the armed forces, the courts and the judiciary, as well as the Monarch

Before the second half of the nineteenth century, the rising industrialist-capitalist class in England had frequent use for the Monarch. Indeed, some of them had no use for the Monarch but when that class became entrenched, then they found that the Monarchy could be used to advance their selfish economic ends. In advising the Monarch on the question of Imperial honours, the British State, which is capitalist, ensures that such awards go to pay off the defenders of that system and to raise the social status of their own class and increase their own economic power. For this reason, we are totally opposed to this system. It also has a tendency to stratify the society, even more so at the existing time,

and to make working-class emancipation extremely difficult.

From all I have said, therefore, it should be clear that the use of these honours is merely as an instrument for the preservation of the divisions existing in the society, not only in Guyana but all over the world. The Monarch, therefore, as an important part of the State apparatus, should not be used in this manner, and that is why we feel this ideological use of the Monarchy and the power to bestow these awards should cease as far as independent Guyana is concerned.

If one were to take a look at the people, particularly in colonial territories, who have been recipients of these honours, one would find where these honours for public service went, to people who, if they were to submit themselves to the electorates of those territories, would have very little support. This is because this system has been used to bribe and corrupt many leaders who were originally progressive, both in politics and trade union work.

I should then conclude my speech by saying that the chief reason the Opposition has for requesting that this Honours List be scrapped is that it is a major means of corruption in some colonial and semi-independent countries. In reply to a remark made by the last speaker, this Motion seeks to have a committee appointed to make recommendations to the Government for appropriate honours to be awarded by the State of Guyana.

3.30 p.m.

In this last Resolve Clause, the Government may either accept or reject the recommendations. I cannot understand why my hon. Friend Mr. Bhagwan was in some doubt as to what this last Clause meant. He also wondered what would happen to those who presently held Imperial Awards. Again, one of the Resolve Clauses states that official recognition of the Awards should cease forthwith. If the gentlemen and the ladies who hold these Imperial Awards wish to continue to use them, that is a matter for them.

What we are saying is that the Government should cease to give any recognition to the Awards. Let the members of the community who wish to support the people who have them do so. All we are saying is that the Government of Guyana should not take any notice of these Awards. The people who have them do not have to throw them back in the face of the British Government as some people in India have done. They can keep them.

From the way in which this debate has been going on — without any contribution from the Government side — I am in little doubt as to whether it will receive the full support of the members of the Government. I hope that with the claim to be fully independent, the hon. Members on the Government Benches will accept our recommendations. Let us reject the British caste system which these honours seem to have introduced in our country and in many other countries.

Mr. Hanid: I must first say that it will be inappropriate not to congratulate the Government for bringing this Motion before the House. This Motion was only published on the 9th of this month. We are very happy to see that some sort of progress is being made in the House. The Motion is self-explanatory and should be accepted by Members of the House.

Let us examine the persons to whom awards were given. Take, for instance, Mr. Joaquin. I do not know for what reason he was given an award. He was probably given it for wearing his short pants and refereeing football matches. Then we come to John Goddard, the Captain of the West Indian Team. He was given an award for merely playing cricket. This thing has become a farce. The Beatles are persons who use drugs and when they went to the United States they even said that they were more popular than Jesus Christ.

After the suspension of the Constitution in 1953, many persons were appointed “puppets” in this House. Many of them were

given awards because they served the “puppets”. For instance, we have the hon. Member Mr. Kendall, Sir John Carter, Sir Lionel Luckhoo, John Fernandes and many other persons. There was the case of the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Sir Donald Sangster who, on his dying bed, was knighted. Apparently, this gentleman would have lived, but on regaining consciousness and realising what this honour meant, the chap dropped dead. *[Interruption]* Men like Dr. Giglioli made considerable contributions in the field of medicine, in the treatment of malaria and filaria diseases. Even the United Nations has complimented Dr. Giglioli.

Let us also take Mr. Ramlakhan as an example. He renounced his award and showed the world that he was no puppet of the Queen. In doing so he has shown that he has a big heart and we should pay tribute to him as a citizen and as a gentleman of Guyana. These things should be noted.

I want to ask all hon. Members in this House to support this Motion. We want a change from the old colonial days. We are an independent state, a state that has become free of all these strings. If we want to be respected by the entire world we will have to act as an independent nation.

3.40 p.m.

The Prime Minister: The Motion which is before this House has a certain amount of substance in so far as its motivation goes. When one takes, for instance, the first “Whereas” clause, the preamble, one notices it states a fact. When one goes, however, to the second clause of the preamble, the second “Whereas” clause, one notices an illogicality. In the first place, independent status is not incompatible with the award of British honours. It depends on the system which has been accepted subsequent to Independence.

One notices also a confusion of thought. At first one would have thought that the reference was to honours; one would have

[THE PRIME MINISTER]

thought that what was intended here was to criticise the acceptance of honours which have an imperial connotation. For instance, I agree with the hon. Member Mr. Wilson that there is a certain obvious contradiction between independence and acceptance of honours after independence in the Order of the British Empire, but when one heard the other contributions on this Motion one got the impression that what was being frowned on — and here I am not yet giving any qualitative judgment — was the award of British honours generally.

The third “Whereas” clause refers to the fact that the precedents do exist, within the Commonwealth, of independent nations remaining in the Commonwealth, and still giving up foreign awards. That is inaccurate if it is intended to be a statement of universality. It is accurate if allusions are being made merely to a number of cases.

What is more important, however, is to look at the Resolve clauses. The first resolution is that “the Government of Guyana cease making recommendations to Her Britannic Majesty for the grant of such awards.” Which awards is the reference to? Is it a reference to imperial honours or a reference to British honours? If it is a reference to British honours then one must be more accurate. Take, for instance, the Order of Merit; that is not an imperial honour, but is a British honour; take, for instance, the Order of the Garter. That is a British honour but not an imperial honour.

The second resolution is to the effect that any recommendation which might already have been made should be immediately withdrawn. That resolution also makes no sense, because of the imprecision of the language in the preamble. Which recommendations, with respect to whom? Is it with respect to Guyanese or is it with respect to all persons living in Guyana?

Now, in Ghana, and I am speaking up to the end of the Nkrumah period, British honours were not awarded to Ghanaian

citizens but were awarded to non-Ghanaian citizens, usually British, on the recommendations of the Ghanaian Government. Let us assume that one can recognise what is intended. Let us say that all British honours are meant. One then has the difficulty, looking at this Motion, to decide whether the rejection of these honours is referable to our nationals or to other nationals within our borders.

“That official recognition of such awards do cease forthwith” is the third Resolve Clause. Admittedly in moving a Motion, as in pleading in a Court of Law, one does not go into details, but one would have expected that the mover of the Motion and those who support the Motion would have given us some better idea of what is meant in the mover’s mind by “recognition”. What is meant by “Official recognition”? Is it the recommendation that persons who have been in receipt of honours should no longer enjoy any precedence or that they should no longer be allowed to append to their names and titles the letters distinguishing them as recipients of these honours?

The real thing is that though the motivation is accepted, though it is understandable, obviously this Motion was drafted all in haste and even those who drafted the Motion did not, when preparing their contributions for this Assembly, get it clear in their minds what had to be done.

Now we come to the fourth Resolve clause, that the Government should —

“set up without delay a National Committee, representative as far as possible of all interests in the community, to consider and make recommendations for the award by the State of appropriate honours to Guyanese nationals who merit recognition for distinguished service to the nation or for outstanding contributions to the arts and sciences.”

Do you want to be in a position to award honours only to Guyanese nationals? Let us assume that you set up a system of Guyana honours. Do you want, when these are set up, to be able to award them only to Guyanese? There are nations throughout the

world that have their distinctive and exclusive award system, exclusive in the sense that only that nation makes the awards, but they do not limit the awards to their own nationals. Pakistan, I know has at least two awards which have been conferred on non-citizens of Pakistan.

3.50 p.m.

There is obviously a sort of haziness.

I am going to deal with the Government's attitude on this whole Motion later. Before I do so, I should like to make some comments on the arguments — philosophical, political and ideological — which have been advanced. Let us concede that every state decides on its honours and the awards of those honours for the purpose of the survival and enhancing of the particular state. I agree with one of the speakers from the Opposition Benches that we can have no quarrel with the British if they decide to confer their honours upon persons whom we would have thought unfit.

It is not for us to question the award of British honours on British citizens, but though one more intelligent member of the Opposition said that, another got up to criticise the awards to the Beatles. Now so far as the British are concerned, the Beatles are the biggest hard currency earners for Britain and that is something good for Britain. That is their business. We do not want other people to be pontificating with respect to our business.

The Queen knights Gordon Richards, a jockey. Now the brother of the hon. Leader of the Opposition would probably think that that is a good thing because he is a turfite. My personal opinion would be that it is nonsense because I do not go to horse racing. [Dr. Jagan: "You went the last time."] That was a matter of duty.

I feel that we should consider the proposition. We must clear our minds of all this cant. If the British want to raise to knighthood or raise to peerage drug addicts, that is their business, but there is no doubt that, in the past, the majority of awards of

British honours within the colonial Empire have been to persons who have served the institution and the system. But we must not, when we have reached the stage and maturity of Independence, keep on merely making blanket statements. [Interruption.] Someone says all the awards. Can anyone in this House or in this country say that the award to Critchlow was an award to a stooge? Can anyone say that the award of a knighthood to Worrell was an award to a stooge? Therefore, let us cease mouthing these apparently "progressive" statements which are inaccurate.

There is no doubt about the fact that, in some cases, the awards of British honours were used to divide and, in some cases, did have the effect of stratification. But the amusing thesis that we are hearing today in the context of suggesting that Guyana has her own honours, is that honours *ipso facto* lead to stratification of society. Where do you go? So involved do some people get in certain positions and certain things that they have read in books that they do not recognise the inconsistency of some of their statements.

I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that the time has come for Guyana to examine the position and Government of this country must make a decision as to what Guyana honours there should be awarded by the Government of Guyana. Incidentally, I should like to set the record straight in so far as Mr. Ramlakhan is concerned. Now I thought that this was a personal matter so far as Mr. Ramlakhan was concerned, but since, either directly or by implication, he has permitted the hon. Member Mr. Hamid to discuss this question, I think I ought to give the facts.

Mr. Ramlakhan was consulted before the recommendation for an M.B.E. was made. Mr. Ramlakhan was asked and he accepted and said that he would be very grateful. When the award was made Mr. Ramlakhan sent a letter to the Prime Minister thanking

[THE PRIME MINISTER]

him for having recognised his sterling services. Then subsequently, under pressure — well all of us in political parties have been under pressure; look at poor Luck, Ramsahoye and even Maccie Hamid — Mr. Ramlakhan wrote to the Governor-General and said that he would no longer accept the award — not because it was a British award; no such nonsense or cant on the part of Mr. Ramlakhan. His reason was that he did not think he could accept an honour because he did not agree with the way the Government was dealing with the rice industry.

This is a perfectly legitimate approach because, after all, the awards are on the recommendation of the Government and Mr. Ramlakhan is entitled to take that position. But for the hon. Member Mr. Hamid to come here and say that he (Mr. Ramlakhan) did not want it because it was a British award and that sort of nonsense is absolutely dishonest, because either he knows the truth and is speaking an untruth, or he is reckless of the consequences of the truthfulness or untruthfulness of the statement he is making in this House. Now that is typical of the Opposition. Of what I have said there is documentary evidence signed, because he is one of the more literate members of the P.P.P.

Now the Government accepts, as I said before, that we ought to have Guyana honours but we cannot decide here, for instance, what these honours are going to be. I take it that it is accepted by the mover of this Motion that the National Assembly is hardly competent to come to a decision of that. We cannot, for instance, decide here and now what will be the criteria on the basis of which the awards should be made. We cannot decide here and now whether the awards should be restricted to Guyanese or, if not restricted to Guyanese, in what circumstances — [Mr. Ram Karran: "The Motion does not ask for that; why are you so dishonest?"] If you will only take the wax out of your ears! I said "if it is not to be

restricted to Guyanese", so be quiet! We cannot here and now decide, if the awards are not to be made exclusively to Guyanese, what should be the criteria for making them to non-Guyanese. Therefore, I assume that that is what led the mover of the Motion to propose a committee. It is proposed that the Government should set up a National Committee, representative, as far as possible, of all interests in the community.

When the mover of the Motion does take advantage of his right to reply I would be most grateful to him if he would set out what he has in his mind — because, if the Committee is to be appointed, the Government would need assistance on this — as to the various interests in the community. It seems to me that the proper thing to be done is for us to have a Committee first, have the recommendations of the Committee considered, and make a decision as to what will be the honours and on what bases or criteria the awards will be made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The sitting is suspended for half an hour.

Sitting suspended at 4 p.m.

4.33 p.m.

On resumption —

The Prime Minister: When the sitting was suspended, I was seeking to indicate that the appointment of a committee to go into this question of National Honours recommended itself, I think, to all of us, whether we were on the Government side or on the Opposition Benches, but the second and third Clauses of the preamble appear abstruse and irrelevant and can be misleading. Therefore, I shall move an Amendment shortly to delete them. The Government will vote against the first, second and third Resolutions and I shall further propose an Amendment to the fourth Resolution.

The Amendment which I propose to the fourth Resolution is that all the words from the word "representative" to the end be deleted and the following be substituted therefor:

‘to go into the question of the establishment of National Honours and to make recommendations.’”

I am proposing that Amendment and if it is carried, the fourth Resolution will read:

‘That the Government set up without delay a National Committee to go into the question of the establishment of National Honours and to make recommendations.’”

In looking at the fourth Resolution as it stands in the recent submission of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, it descends to some details and, therefore, my proposal is to leave out all details and to retain the general and big question of Honours, then we can consider other things which apparently are in the mind of the mover of the Motion as to what we should do about recognition of previously earned awards and what we should do if, as is being mooted now, there is a Commonwealth award in addition to peculiarly National awards.

This matter has been raised by the Government of Guyana in certain quarters and I should therefore prefer if this National Committee can address its mind to what Honours there should be, the criteria for the award of Honours and also what is to be done about previously bestowed awards, what should be the attitude of the Government of Guyana in so far as Honours bestowed from outside are concerned and in so far as Commonwealth honours, which may be subsequently established, are concerned.

Now, the third consideration should allude to is not as unimportant as it seems because one finds, particularly during a war, sometimes a particular person does something outstanding for a country; this is not his native country and with the permission of his Government, he can receive the award. I recall the case of an American Admiral receiving a Knighthood. He was given special permission to receive it. If we, in instituting honours, contemplate granting our honours to non-nationals in special cases, or accepting foreign honours, we ought also to get very clearly laid down,

the circumstances, if any, in which these can be bestowed or accepted.

As I said, the motivation behind the composite Motion is something accepted but there is so much one has to get through, and though the committee will be appointed without delay, I am not sure we can get through during the last few months of this year.

I heard from the Opposition Benches that there are some awards which do not carry a colonial, imperial, or ex-colonial stigma. For instance, in law, there is an award to lawyers. In Canada, though they said they will take no British honours, they kept the Q.C. There is a difference of opinion right here because an hon. Member of the Opposition alluded to the fact that the award of Q.C. to outstanding lawyers is not reprehensible.

It is making a greater concession than I am inclined to make as an individual. Therefore, this is something that we have to thresh out carefully and consider when the Report is submitted. In India, for instance, they did not keep that but they instituted S.C. In Canada they kept that.

4.40 p.m.

I would finally ask the mover of the Motion, when he gets up to reply, to assist us further as to what he considers ought to be the composition of the National Committee. We are agreed on two things, (1) that we should have our own Honours System, and (2) that we should have a National Committee appointed without delay to go into this question. I should, therefore, like to hear more from the hon. Leader of the Opposition as to what he considers should be the composition of the National Committee because the hon. Member Mr. Bhagwan raised the question of the Maha Sabha, and I understood that he also raised the question of ASCRIA. Perhaps he would have raised the question of the Islamic Anjuman, if he had not been interrupted.

[THE PRIME MINISTER]

Frankly speaking, it appears to me that if this Committee's recommendations are going to be worth-while, not only should we have the political parties or political bodies represented, but other bodies which can, and do, make an impact on people's thinking. If you do not live in an authoritarian society, for an award to have any meaning and acceptance, it must be an award which people generally think is worth-while and good. I do not think that, though the political parties and the dominant moulders of opinion and thought, they are the exclusive moulders of opinion and thought. I think that there are many other organisations that ought to be brought into this National Committee, and, therefore, I give notice and move the following Amendments:

- (i) Delete the second and third paragraphs of the preamble to the Motion. (ii) Delete the First, Second and Third Resolve Clauses of the Motion. (iii) Delete the comma and words from, 'representative' in the second line to "sciences" in the last line of the Fourth Resolve Clause, and substitute the words "to go into the question of the establishment of National Honours and to make recommendations."

If these Amendments are accepted, as I suspect they will be, the amended Motion will then read:

'Whereas Guyana is now a politically independent State;

Be it resolved that the Government set up without delay a National Committee to go into the question of the establishment of National Honours and to make recommendations." [Applause.]

Mr. Hubbard: I was somewhat amazed to listen to the Prime Minister as he treated us to a series of interpretations of the wording of the Motion. He was splitting hairs. I appreciate that he was in a –

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, are you speaking on the Amendments?

Mr. Hubbard: I am speaking on the whole thing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Well, then, are you winding up the debate?

Mr. Hubbard: I have not spoken, Your Honour. The Prime Minister is in a difficult position because one who seeks to be a progressive nationalist is automatically and naturally averse to having the favours of another State handed down to his fellow citizens. But, in his position as Prime Minister, he is not sovereign in the sense that he has to accommodate the views and opinions of the United Force which is notoriously reactionary, and, therefore, a drag upon the progressive elements which may exist in the community and the national economy. He has my sympathy on that.

But as he also has my congratulations for having progressed considerably in his understanding of the use of words, and reached the meticulous state which he now seeks to employ.

In the *Hansard* of 27th April, 1961, column 1213, the gentleman who is now Prime Minister moved this motion:

"Be it resolved that to prevent impersonating at the 1961 General Elections provisions be made for the indelible staining of the thumbs of voters who have voted."

Mr. Burnham happens to be a Queen's Council, but the Attorney-General of the day drew his attention to the fact that a person might well be without thumbs. Mr. Burnham saw the point at once and he agreed to the then Attorney-General's Amendment that the word "fingers" should be submitted for the word "thumbs."

This Motion seeks to help the people in this country to free themselves from the system which is detestable today. The British Government is not representative of any progressive thinking. We are well aware that the patron of this coalition, Duncan Sandys, spoke recently on the British television about the necessity for sending home coloured people because they do not want to have them breeding half castes in Britain.

4.50p.m.

Sandys was an integral part of this system of P.R. and I for my part would wish to be free of any taint of this British system. Britain is operating villainy today in England and elsewhere and it is the same story. I have not forgotten how the *Times* boasted recently that the manoeuvre was carried out in this country at a very cheap price, only 117 dead and an uncounted number wounded. I do not wish that kind of philosophy to be thrown on the people of this country because no good can spring from villainy. Naturally, the whole system of British honours is a system of honouring villainy.

The Government has found itself unable to condemn the system of British honours. It has now restricted itself to proposing the usual British formula: when you run into a bit of difficulty you put the matter on the Order Paper and you refer it to a Committee. Then it may die because there is no one to ask.

I am very unhappy that the Government has had to save itself behind this device, but I suppose we ought to take comfort in the fact that the Government brought the Motion for debate — it did it for a year — and is now prepared to study it. We are grateful.

Mr. Ram Karran: First of all, I wish to observe that the hon. Prime Minister has made a very poor show today. Never before has he made such a poor show. Words seemed to have failed him completely. The occasions when I saw him with a little “spounce” was when he attempted to deal with some irrelevant matters.

The question of awarding decorations has an ancient history. The Greeks used to crown their athletes with laurels. Alexander the Great gave his soldiers golden buttons. The Romans gave their soldiers crowns to wear and legend has it that Julius Caesar swam the Rubicon with one of these crowns. [*The Prime Minister*: “The Romans never gave crowns. They gave their old soldiers wreaths.”]

The first recorded decoration was made in the Garden or outside the Garden, when the Lord put a mark on Cain’s head to indicate to others that he should not be slain for having committed murder on his brother Abel. That, perhaps, is the first decoration and we seem to be using the same yardstick for the award of decorations.

Persons who have followed the history of the Cain and Abel affair, the history of the feudal times and early capitalist period will recall that the award of decorations was a very regular affair. Except for occasional decorations on the field of battle, knights were promoted from the rank of pageboy. Cervantes in his immortal work criticised very accurately the system of awards. It will be recalled that in those days people were trained not only to work for the church and to defend the honour of women, but to lay down their lives in defence of the poor. It was only when they took the injunctions too seriously that some of them ended up like Robin Hood in the Forest of Sherwood.

It is from this tradition that Sir John Hawkins, the British slave-dealer, was knighted and so were other adventurers and buccaneers like him. I thought that the hon. Prime Minister would have taken that fact into consideration in making recommendations for a Guyanese, perhaps a descendant of one of the three men brought to this country by Sir John Hawkins, to have awarded to him, a senior diplomat of our country, the same knighthood that Sir John Hawkins had.

5. p.m.

Our Governor-General, a gentleman for whom we all hold very high regard as a Guyanese, is also handed one of these detestable knighthoods.

One can easily understand and sympathise with the fact that many of our countrymen carry names derived from the English nation, but how can one sympathise with people who, after having attained their Independence, clamour for the same whip that lashed during the period of servitude? How can we say that we are independent

[MR. RAM KARRAN]

and still award knighthoods and C.M.G. medals?

This Motion does not seek to limit the change from Knighthoods and C.M.G.'s. There are lower orders to which Guyanese people are subjected every year. I refer to the awards of M.B.E., O.B.E., C.B.E., K.B.E. If we cancel the B.E.'s we are left with a very vulgar word — M.O.C.K. — for which the members of this puppet Government seem to hang their mouths. I thought my hon. Friend Mr. Joaquin would have spoken on this Motion; he is a member of the "M.O.C.K." order. Our Prime Minister has gone to a lot of trouble to retain the "M.O.C.K." order.

Your Honour will recall that when service bullets were penetrating the stomachs of innocent Guyanese — men, women and children —, all the awards, except one, granted to the West Indies were dumped in Guyana. The Prime Minister himself has been awarded the title of Q.C. I do not know whether he got it for length of service as a barrister or for doing anything outstanding. I hope that the decolonisation announced by the members of the P.N.C. will start soon. I wish to congratulate them. I know that they have not started yet and I hope that this Motion will give them the impetus to start.

The hon. Prime Minister said a lot of things which are undoubtedly meaningless. He wanted to know whether the awards to Critchlow and Worrell were awards to stooges. That is beside the point. The P.P.P. Government paid the greatest tribute to an outstanding Guyanese patriot when it built a permanent memorial. Something similar should have been done. The hon. Prime Minister should not attempt to mislead us. He knows that there is nothing at all that comes from the U.K. Government that is not tainted with colonialism and imperialism. In the feudal period and the early capitalist period it was necessary for this type of decoration in a class society.

I heard the hon. Prime Minister say that he is a better communist and Marxist than Jagan. [*An hon. Member (Government):* "Why don't you sit down? You are talking nonsense."] If we are moving to a classless society perhaps we will take a longer time than the rest of the world.

5.10 p.m.

If, judging from the Prime Minister's utterances, we are moving to a classless society, then we ought not to overload ourselves with the decorations of the capitalist and feudal systems. We should begin to think of awarding decorations that would suit. Are we going to award big business executives and people who fit in with the system of co-operation?

I am suspicious of this decision of the Prime Minister to delete all these Resolutions and the major part of this fourth Resolution and insert a sentence, which is quite meaningless, and which makes the Motion fit for the wastepaper basket. He wants to set a National Committee. I should like him to tell this House what he means. The other day, the United Sad'r Islamic Anjuman had to write the Minister of Communications (Mr. Correia) pointing out that the National History and Arts Council was not at all representative of the public because members of that committee had been omitted and that meant that a large section of the community was omitted.

We have had enough dealings with the Prime Minister to understand the type of committee he would set up, and if it does meet, it would recommend exactly what the Prime Minister wants. This lawyer, who is a Q.C., does not understand that we must reach the stage where we have to stop making recommendations for these awards because they encourage the people to separate themselves into different sections and eventually the Prime Minister will find himself right down at the bottom.

Mr. Wilson: I am speaking on the Amendment. I do not agree that these

Clauses should be deleted. As regards the second Clause, I should like to say that I cannot see the reason why we must delay taking action on the first resolve Clause, that the Government cease making recommendations. As regards what exists, I think, as quickly as possible, we should cut ourselves away from these things. That is what I should like to emphasize.

I am making a suggestion for an Amendment to the Prime Minister's last resolve Clause, that after the words "National Honours" be inserted the words "for the future". Let us agree to the resolve Clauses dealing with the present position. Let us cut away from these trappings of imperialism. It is most reprehensible that we should be a "Member of the British Empire." It is an insult to our sovereignty. I cannot see how the Prime Minister could delay in accepting those resolve Clauses, which help us to pull ourselves away, to renounce all existing honours which make us appendages of the British Empire.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is that an Amendment or a suggestion?

Mr. Wilson: It is a suggestion.

Dr. Jagan (replying): We have taken note of the contribution made by the hon. Prime Minister in making an Amendment. As one speaker pointed out, it seems that the Government is merely trying to get away from facing the problem and, as usual, defers grappling with the situation by appointing a committee. [*The Prime Minister:* "You suggested a committee."]

We suggested in the resolve Clauses 1, 2 and 3 certain definite things and these are taken out. In other words, the teeth of the whole matter are extracted. It is something like the statement made by Ambassador from Zambia to the effect that the British bulldog is toothless. It seems that, in Guyana, we have a toothless Government.

5.20 p.m.

I have come now to grappling with the problems. The Prime Minister has raised the question of composition of the National

Committee. I do not think at this point that I can just say "X", "Y" or "Z". As one hon. Member pointed out, great care should be taken to decide on this since there are so many difficult and sometimes conflicting interests in our community, and in some cases some organisations attempt to speak for the same interests.

I would suggest that, in view of the remarks which were made, it may be wise on such an issue, since it is necessary to have a national consensus, for the Government and Opposition to be equally represented in such a body so that one could avoid this question of who should be represented for a particular type of interest.

We know that the Government sponsors organisations like the Pandits' Council, so, while I appreciate the point that the political parties may not speak in such detail as the representative organisation itself, I would suggest that if these awards are to mean anything, if they are to be recognised and respected, this matter should be left for consultation between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

But the Prime Minister should not deal with this question as high-handedly as he dealt with the formation of other public bodies such as the Public Service Commission. We had to point out in the House last week that it is because of his partisanship in this matter that the Civil Service Association has become very critical of the Public Service Commission.

On one occasion, I reminded him that when he was in the Opposition he had suggested at the Independence Conference that in bodies such as this, the Government and the Opposition should be represented equally. But, having got in the Government, he departs from this.

As I said, I hope the Prime Minister will, in the fullness of time, recognise the mistakes, and if he is really interested to see this country go ahead, if he wants this country to move forward, then I think this matter should be resolved by a consensus in the full sense of the word; not a con-

[DR. JAGAN]

sensus just for the purpose of observing what the Constitution states, but for the purpose of achieving the end results.

Having said that, I should like to state our position on the Amendments. We will agree with the deletion of the second and third paragraphs of the preamble to the Motion. We do not agree with the second item, that is, the deletion of the First, Second and Third Resolve Clauses of the Motion. We feel that those are specific objections which we must grapple with now. Therefore, I will propose an Amendment which will be for the deletion of the last Resolve Clause and the substitution of what the Prime Minister suggested, so that the new Amendment to his Amendment will read as follows:

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please give it to us in writing.

Dr. Jagan: I have it here, sir. I think it is rather simple. I would urge the Government to accept it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, is there anything you would like to say?

The Prime Minister: No, sir. I cannot go along with the First, Second and Third Resolve Clauses, especially the Third one which does not make sense to me. If we accept something like that we will have to know what it means. There is a relative clause, "such" awards. What awards is he talking about?

5.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would regret very much having these Amendments and the Motion being put to the vote and having a division on them. I want to suggest to the Assembly that we suspend the Sitting for ten minutes to allow the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to have talks. If the Assembly agrees, we can suspend the Sitting for ten minutes so that the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister can have consultations and come back with one

simple Amendment. [Applause.] [Hon. Members indicated their assent to this suggestion.] The Sitting is suspended for ten minutes. I suggest that hon. Members keep their seats.

Sitting suspended accordingly at 5.30 p.m.

6 p.m.

On resumption —

The Prime Minister: Mr. Speaker, I regret to announce that we have not been able to reach total agreement, but I think what we can say, at least, is that what the Government is prepared to concede is acceptable through the Opposition would like more. My hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition can confirm that. We will concede that in the first Resolve clause there should be an Amendment to read:

'That Government of Guyana cease making recommendations to Her Britannic Majesty for the grant of awards in the Order of the British Empire;'

the second Resolve clause to remain as is; the deletion of the third Resolve clause to be as moved in the Amendment. My hon. Friend would tell you that he would like to cease the recommendations for other Orders but the Government is only prepared to go as far as to agree to the immediate cessation of the recommendation with respect to Orders of the British Empire.

Dr. Jagan: I should like to know whether the Prime Minister is amending his original Amendment.

The Prime Minister: Yes, sir, because I understand that my hon. Friend will vote for it though he will want more.

Dr. Jagan: I just want to know whether he is amending his Amendment to include this.

The Prime Minister: What we are trying to do is to get a consensus without a division and therefore I will take in the first Resolve clause limiting the awards to the Order of the British Empire; I will leave the second

Resolve clause as is; I will delete the third Resolve clause and have the fourth Resolve clause amended as proposed originally, which the hon. Member, Dr. Jagan, had indicated he would accept.

Dr. Jagan: There has been, as the Prime Minister said, some meeting of minds but I am afraid that it was not complete. In other words, we agree that the third Resolve clause in the original Motion which reads:

“That official recognition of such awards do cease forthwith” should be taken out; that the second Resolve clause should remain, but we disagree about the first Resolve clause. The Prime Minister wants to limit it to the grant of awards pertaining to the Order of the British Empire, which means mainly the M.B.E., O.B.E., and C.B.E. We feel that the others should come too. We are not talking now of Q.C.’s; we are talking of such others as C.M.G., K.C.M.C., G.C.M.G., and any other form of knighthood.

We would like to accept with the Prime Minister has suggested as regards the second and third Resolve clauses, but the first Resolve clause should read as follows:

“Be it Resolved that the Government of Guyana cease making recommendations to Her Britannic Majesty for the grant of the following awards:-

M.B.E.,
O.B.E.,
C.B.E.,
C.M.G.,
K.C.M.C.,
G.C.M.G.

and any other form of Knighthood.”

In other words, we are just going a little beyond where he is. I should like to read what would be an Amendment to his Amendment:

“Whereas Guyana is now a politically independent State;

Be it resolved that the Government of Guyana cease making recommendations to Her Britannic Majesty for the grant of the following awards:

M.B.E.,
O.B.E.,
C.B.E.,

C.M.G.,
K.C.M.C.,
G.C.M.G.

and any other form of Knighthood.”

The Prime Minister: I was suggesting to my hon. Friend that I appreciated that he wanted to go further but if we are prepared to go only that far, well, a compromise is a compromise. Let him accept how far we are prepared to go and let us finish with it, otherwise we are going to have a vote, which is unnecessary. *[Interruption by Mr. Ram Karran.]* There is no point in Mr. Ram Karran taking up that attitude because there is only one person whom the Constitution recognises as Leader of the Opposition.

6.05 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there any further compromise?

Dr. Jagan: I am afraid that having taken advice from my colleagues I cannot make any further compromise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The position is that there are only two Amendments to be put before the House. All the other Amendments have been agreed upon and have become part of the original Motion. In that case, I will first put the Amendment moved by the Mover himself. The Amendment is really to Resolve Clause 1; all the others are agreed to.

The Prime Minister: One and two which follow one.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You will agree on 2 provided your Amendment is accepted.

The Prime Minister: I will put it this way: If the Mover accepts my Amendment I will agree to 1, as amended by me, and 2. If he does not accept my Amendment, we will vote against 1 and 2.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will put the two principal Amendments. The first Amendment is the Amendment to Resolve Clause 1. If that Amendment is accepted then I will put Resolve Clause 2. If it is not accepted and the Prime Minister

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER]

Amendment is accepted, it means that Resolve Clause 2 is also accepted.

The Prime Minister: No, sir. What I offer is a compromise. If that is not accepted I stick to my original Amendment. My original Amendment is what I had asked to be submitted to the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think we tried our best to reach a compromise. Would you like to say anything more, hon. Leader of the Opposition?

Dr. Jagan: No Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Question is that Resolve Clause 1 be amended to read as follows:

“That the Government of Guyana cease making recommendations to Her Britannic Majesty for the grant of the following awards:

M.B.E.,
O.B.E., C.B.E.,
C.M.G.,
K.C.M.G.,
G.C.M.G.

and any other form of Knighthood.”

Amendment put, and negatived.

Dr. Jagan: Division!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let the Division be taken;

Assembly divided: Ayes 17, Noes 23, as follows:

Ayes	Noes
Mr. Bhagwan	Mr. Wharton
Mr. Ramjohn	Rev. Trotman
Mr. Persaud	Mr. Sancho
Mr. Linde	Mr. Persaud
Mr. Ally	Mr. Mahraj
Mr. Khan	Mr. Kasim
Mr. Lall	Mr. Budhoo
Mr. Jagan	Mr. Blair
Mr. Hamid	Mr. Joaquin
Mr. Wilson	Mr. Duncan
Mr. Nunes	Mr. Clarke
Mr. Jacob	Mr. Bowman
Mr. Hubbard	Mr. deGroot

Mr. Chandisingh
Mr. Ram Karran
Mr. Benn
Dr. Jagan - 17

Mr. Singh
Mr. Merriman
Mr. Kendall
Mr. Jordan
Mr. John
Mr. Correia
Mr. Cheeks
Mr. Bissember
Dr. Reid
Mr. Burnham - 23

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Amendment is lost. I will now put the Amendment proposed by the Prime Minister. The Amendment has been circulated and it reads as follows:

- “(i) Deletion of the second and third paragraphs of the preamble to the motion;
- (ii) Deletion of the first, second and third resolve clauses of the motion;
- (iii) Deletion of the comma and words from, ‘representative’ in the second line to ‘sciences’ in the last line of the fourth resolve clause and the substitution of the words ‘to go into the question of the establishment of National Honours and to make recommendations.’”

Amendment put, and agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Motion will now read as follows:

‘Whereas Guyana is now a politically independent State;

Resolved, that the Government set up without delay a National Committee to go into the question of the establishment of National Honours and to make recommendations.’

*Question put, and agreed to.
Motion carried.*

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, “That this Assembly do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.” [Mr. Bissember.]

Adjourned accordingly at 6.12 p.m.