

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT

[Volume 5]

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE SECOND PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE
CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA**

10th Sitting

2 p.m.

Monday, 21st June, 1971

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. Sase Narain, J.P.

Members of the Government

People's National Congress

Elected Ministers

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

(Absent)

The Honourable P.A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture

The Honourable M. Kasim, A.A.,
Minister of Communications

The Honourable H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Finance

The Honourable W.G. Carrington,
Minister of Labour and Social Security

The Honourable Miss S.M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Education

The Honourable B. Ramsaroop
Minister of Trade (Leader of the House)

The Honourable D.A. Singh,
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction

The Honourable O.E. Clarke,
Minister of Home Affairs

The Honourable C.V. Mingo,
Minister of Local Government

Appointed Ministers

The Honourable S.S. Ramphal, S.C.,
Attorney-General and Minister of State **(Absent)**

The Honourable H. Green,
Minister of Works and Hydraulics and Supply **(Absent)**

The Honourable H.O. Jack,
Minister of Mines and Forest **(Absent)**

Dr. the Honourable Sylvia Talbot,
Minister of Health **(Absent)**

Parliamentary Secretaries

Mr. J.G. Joaquin, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance

Mr. P. Duncan, J.P.
Parliamentary Secretary, Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. W. Haynes,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister. **(Absent)**

Mr. A. Salim,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture

Mr. J.R. Thomas,
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister

Mr. C.E. Wrights, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works, Hydraulics and Supply (Absent)

Other Members

Mr. J.N. Aaron
Miss. M.M. Ackman, (Government Whip)
Mr. K. Bancroft
Mr. N.J. Bissember (Absent)
Mr. J. Budhoo, J.P.
Mr. L.I. Chan-A-Sue
Mr. E.F. Correia
Mr. M. Corrica
Mr. E.H.A. Fowler
Mr. R.J. Jordon
Mr. S.M. Saffee
Mr. R.C. Van Sluytman
Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.
Mr. L.W. Willems

Members of the Opposition

People's Progressive Party

Dr. C.B. Jagan, (Leader of the Opposition)
Mr. Ram Karran
Mr. R. Chandisingh
Dr. F.H.W. Ramsahoye, S.C. (Absent)
Mr. D.C. Jagan, J.P., (Deputy Speaker) (Absent)
Mr. E.M.G. Wilson
Mr. A.M. Hamid, J.P., (Opposition Whip)
Mr. G.H. Lall
Mr. M.Y. Ally
Mr. R.D. Persaud, J.P.
Mr. E.M. Stoby
Mr. R. Ally (Absent)
Mr. E. L. Ambrose
Mr. L.M. Branco
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mr. Bhola Persaud
Mr. I. R. Remington, J.P.
Mrs. R.P. Sahoye
Mr. V. Teekah (Absent—on leave)

United Force

Mrs. E. DaSilva
Mr. M.F. Singh
Mr. J. A. Sutton

(Absent – on leave)
(Absent – on leave)

Independent

Mr. R. E. Cheeks

OFFICERS

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

The National Assembly met at 2.00 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker *in the Chair*]

Prayers

21.6.1971

National Assembly

2.10 – 2.15 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave to Members

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted to the hon. Member Mrs. Willems, the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh and the hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva for today's sitting.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Paper was laid:

Customs Duties (Exemption from Import Duties) Order, 1971 (No. 31), made under section 8 of the Custom Ordinance, Chapter 309, on the 4th of June, 1971, and published in the Gazette on the 12th of June, 1971. [**The Minister of Finance**]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

BILLS – SECOND AND THIRD READING

NEW AMSTERDAM ELECTRIC LIGHTING ORDER (EXTENSION)

(AMENDMENT) Bill, 1971

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to provide for the extension of the New Amsterdam Electric Lightening Order, 1900 for a period of nine years.” [**The Minister of Finance**]

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Hoyte): Your Honour, the New Amsterdam Town Council are the undertakers for the supply of electricity to the residents of the town of New Amsterdam. The legislation that confers the necessary authority and regulates the undertakers in the performance of their duties really is contained in the New Amsterdam Electric Lighting Order, 1900.

21.6.1971

National Assembly

2.10 – 2.15 p.m.

In 1961 the New Amsterdam Electric Lighting Order (Extension) Ordinance of 1961 was enacted, and in terms of that Ordinance, the Order has been extended for a period of one year from time to time.

2.15 p.m.

In 1969, the Town Council made representations to the Government to put them in a firmer position in respect of the length of time under which they may exercise their statutory powers as undertakers for electricity. Those representations were based on the fact that the Town Council had been investing heavily in the modernising and expansion of their electricity undertakings. It is considered only fair and reasonable that, for the time being, the *ad hoc* arrangement should cease and the Town Council should be guaranteed an extended period during which they should carry out their functions as undertakers for the supply of electricity.

This Bill seeks to amend the New Amsterdam Electric Lighting Order Extension Ordinance, 1961, by providing that the Order, instead of being for a period of one year only, shall continue in force for a period of nine years with effect from the 1st January, 1972. Hon. Members will recall that by Resolution No. 28 passed in this House on 21st December, 1970 the Order was extended for the period 1971 so that the year 1971 has already been taken care of by virtue of that Resolution.

It is a very simple Bill. it is one which I think the Opposition has requested from time to time, because, every time the Order comes up for extension, there has been the criticism that instead of having the Order for one year it should be made to extend for a much longer period. As a result Government brings this Bill before the House today.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Hamid.

Mr. Hamid: Mr. Speaker, the Bill which is before the House seeking an extension for a period of nine years to my mind is rather ill-timed. The Minister mentioned that as time went by

21.6.1971

National Assembly

2.15 – 2.25 p.m.

Member on this side of the House were rather critical in relation to this yearly extension. But one will have to take into consideration what the Government has in mind with respect to the rural and urban electrification programme.

As we see it this Bill is a definite departure from the original suggestion made last year and the many years even before 1970. We have a Bill before the House every year for the extension of this Order and the suggestions were made that the Government with its urban and rural electrification programme was merely bringing this Bill to facilitate so that in the near future the programme envisaged by the Electricity Corporation will be implemented and a proper system of power generated in the New Amsterdam area be had. But what do we find? We find that the Government seems to be lacking in this approach. The Corporation seems not to be making itself financial enough so as to cope with this programme. To our mind that is why this 9-year has been given; the Government cannot find the necessary funds and as such New Amsterdam will have to remain with its antiquated supply of electricity for another decade. Electricity supply in New Amsterdam is on the decline. It was so in the past and as we see it now, it will continue for an indefinite period.

Coupled with this, one to consider the way high cost of charges per unit. It is estimated that electricity charges in New Amsterdam can be regarded as the highest in the world. It is approximately 25 cents per kilowatt. Had the Government seen it fit to extend the electricity programme throughout the length and breadth of this country surely by now an adequate supply of current and a proper plan to manage the affairs of the Corporation would have been the ideal proposition.

When the People's Progressive Party was in office as Government it had purchased the Demerara Electricity Company and made the company into a Corporation and placed someone as Manager. The newspapers stated: "A tailor heads the Electricity Corporation". But this clearly shows that apart from this individual being a tailor he had the ability to run the Corporation efficiently. We saw during the first year of the life the Guyana Electricity Corporation the Government was able to pay off a year and a half ahead of time. And this was indeed very good

21.6.1971

National Assembly

2.15 – 2.25 p.m.

when one considers what even the consultants Preece, Cardew and Rider had said. They said that if the Government was to continue at the rate at which it was proceeding in the first ten years the Corporation would be able to make a matter of \$20 million and in the second ten-year period it would be \$40 million.

The experts made it quite clear that the anticipated profits mentioned would be net after deduction and expansion of countrywide rural electrification. Along with this, we see that the Government has never made an attempt to approach these problems. Then it went into extending the Greater New Amsterdam area which has to cater for many more people using electricity. It is claimed that the implementation of the Marshall Plan will bring about more autonomy, but in fact at their election campaign it was said that if you do not vote P.N.C. you will not get loans, that there will be no extension in the rural electrification programme. All sorts of things were promised the electorate. Dr. A. Marshall himself said that three important points must be considered if the Government will venture into marshallisation; one was adequate supply of water, the other was a better functioning system of drainage and irrigation and thirdly, above all, rural electrification.

2.25 p.m.

These things are important because of the growing population, the extension of the township, and the industries that are cropping up. If this Government is going to bring a Bill to have this programme extended for a further nine years, it shows two things: either it does not have the money necessary for the extension programme, or corruption is at its highest in the Corporation.

The Mayor is reported in the *Evening Post* to have said that he was seeking permission to raise \$1 million loan. Of this, he said, \$600,000 was earmarked for electrification. He went on to show where machinery to the value of \$½ million is lying idle at the plant, corroding in some cases, because of not being put into use. No attempt can be made by Government to assist the local authority either by loans, grants, or what have you, and thus, the Mayor himself, an active PNC member, has come out clearly showing the Government the need for electricity in the Greater New Amsterdam area.

21.6.1971

National Assembly

2.25 – 2.35 p.m.

I do not know if the hon. Minister is willing to say fully. It is not a case of saying that year after year the members of the Opposition have been complaining about this Bill being before the House and that the Government should seek a longer extension. The PPP was always saying that the time had come for the Government to be finished with electricity generating in the New Amsterdam plant.

If because of lack of funds or because of corruption at the helm, there is no progress, let us, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition said, have members of the People's Progressive Party appointed to serve on these boards and committees so that they can see the disgraceful actions that are going on. We need checks and balances. It is not a case of putting only PNC members to run a Corporation. We have seen in the past where members were utilising their powers to appoint their relatives, their wives, their daughters, to permanent positions, receiving in some cases two or three times the salary to which they are entitled.

Let us have the Board scrapped; appoint new members, giving members of the Opposition their rightful place on these Boards and Committees so that they can serve a useful purpose. Let us set up the anti-corruption committee with equal sides, with a rotating chairman so that we can deal from the top to the bottom. It is no sense Ministers saying that because of corruption, we will have to get rid of members, even Members of Parliament. It was only today that I read in the *Guyana Graphic* that several Ministers in Egypt will be brought to justice for corrupt practices. Let us see what can be done in this country by this anti-corruption committee, because it seems as if corruption is present from the top to the bottom. It is only in this respect that we will be able to see the real rural and urban electrification programme on its true footing.

Mr. Ram Karran: I was not present when my friend the hon. Minister, spoke but I understand that he said that this extension of nine years, a long period of gestation, has been proposed by the Government in order to prevent criticisms of a one-year extension. [**Mr. Hoyte:** "Who said that?"] I apologise if the Minister did not say so. I wish to deal with this from this aspect, that this New Amsterdam Lighting Order was made originally in 1900, and the original provision was for extensions of 20-year periods. The first time it was extended was in 1932 and it

21.6.1971

National Assembly

2.25 – 2.35 p.m.

went on until in the late 1950's when the People's Progressive Party came on the scene. We asked for an extension of one year at a time. We asked for several extensions over a short period because the policy of the Government then was for the complete electrification of the country.

Sir, you will probably recall that at the time when the interim incompetents went out of office, they had left \$11 million on paper for rural electrification but actually there was no money. It was only a pious hope. The PPP obtained money for the purchase and the simultaneous expansion of the Georgetown system and was moving rapidly for the takeover of the New Amsterdam works by the Guyana Electricity Corporation so that the people in New Amsterdam, too, could have benefitted from the expansion of the service.

I do not think anyone can complain so far as the Demerara system is concerned and even the blueprint for the expansion of electricity in Western Berbice was planned and set down by the PPP. It was therefore only left for us to move to the New Amsterdam section, and that is why we decided to extend the New Amsterdam Lighting Order gradually for one year, until the Corporation was able to take over and to expand rapidly.

It must be a bit disturbing and surprising that this Government, which talks about doing everything for the people, and helping the small man to become a real man, has come and given this House the assurance that absolutely nothing will be done for nine years in the expansion of electricity in Berbice, because this Bill which the hon. Minister has introduced is an indication that no expansion is in view.

My friend has correctly asked, what about expansion into the Greater New Amsterdam, what about expansion into the areas outside of Greater New Amsterdam, what about expansion to the Canje and Corentyne areas? The hon. Minister might, when he gets up to reply, give us an indication whether this Bill is going to stifle development. [*Interruption by the hon. Minister of Finance.*] I really would not like to reply to the hon. Minister.

21.6.1971

National Assembly

2.35 – 2.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, that was an aside.

Mr. Ram Karran: From his seat he shouts about the stupidity of hon. Members on this side of the House. I hope one of these days when one of the members on this side replies to him he is not going to come across here to slap him as he tries to do or that Your Honour will not attempt to put the member outside of the House. [**Mr. Hoyte:** "But you are stupid ."]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance!

Mr. Hoyte: I apologise, sir.

Mr. Ram Karran: I was inviting the hon. Minister in his reply to tell us what are the Government's plans in so far as the expansion of electricity in Berbice is concerned. I know, and I think the whole country knows, that we have electricity to the value of 1.6 megawatts lying idle in the South Georgetown area. The equipment was brought here by the P.P.P. Government and is now inactive. It is very rarely used except when the central plants have run out of power. Surely 1.6 megawatts of electricity will do a great deal to the expansion of electricity in Berbice.

Those things were discussed earlier and the information must be available to the members of the Guyana Electricity Corporation or to the Government. Perhaps the hon. Minister will give us an idea as to whether it is Government's intention to utilise idle capacity which is lying in South Georgetown. Most important, will the hon. Minister tell us when Government proposed to allow the Guyana Electricity Corporation to take over the plant from the New Amsterdam Town Council and to expand electricity supply in the Corentyne and Berbice areas.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Jagan): The presumption behind this Bill is that it is unlikely that there will be any change in the *status quo*, so far as we can see, in the future.

I should like to ask the Minister if he can tell the House what are the plans of the Government - my colleagues have raised the question and I should like to put it a little bit more

21.6.1971

National Assembly

2.35 – 2.45 p.m.

specifically - as regards not only rural electrification but the expansion and development of the central electricity services. I refer to those in Georgetown.

As far as I remember, when the nationalisation of the Demerara Electricity Company took place, the consultants, Preece, Carew and Rider, recommended that the new corporation should purchase two 10 -megawatt plants and subsequent to that go over to hydro-electricity because this would have been the cheapest method of providing further power to the plants.

At that time the proposal was that the hydro -electricity should be developed at Malali in the Demerara River. We know that the Government did not pursue this and at one time it was talking of developing Tiboku with a multi-million, over \$200 million, dollar project. We know that that bubble has burst. [Mr. Hoyte: "Who says so?"] You have told us that that bubble has burst.

What we have learnt is that the World Bank has apparently turned down an application which the Government made for the development of that project. We should like to know what the plans of the Government are. Is it feeding the Electricity Corporation works with new steam generators? If that is so, it is most uneconomical.

We read only last week where the President of the Berbice Chamber of Commerce was making some suggestion about approaching the Surinam Government which, we understand, has surplus hydro-electricity to see whether that surplus could be used for electrification of the whole of the Corentyne. I am not saying that this is a desirable course. We know also that Venezuela has a great deal of surplus electricity because of the huge hydro works which it has put in at Caroni. I am not here suggesting that we should tie in with Venezuela.

The main point I am making is that two of our neighbours on our borders have surplus hydro-electricity, cheap electricity. According to the consultants who advised the Government previously this is the direction in which we should have gone quite a few years ago, but we have not done so; we have not done so in the past six years.

We should like to know what are the specific plans of the Government. Is it planning to go in for hydro-electricity development or is it purchasing further uneconomic steam units? What

21.6.1971

National Assembly

2.35 – 2.45 p.m.

are the plans for rural electrification for the whole country? How long will it take before the whole country is electrified? [Mr. Hoyte: "In the Pakaraima mountains too?"] When we speak of the whole country we are speaking of the settled areas, the populated areas, the coast predominantly. Of course, one would think that if we had cheap hydro-electricity many other areas would come into this scheme.

We know that because of the present haphazard manner in which electricity is generated, for instance in New Amsterdam, consumers have to pay very high rates. We read recently where the works in Bartica had to be handed over to the Government. [Mr. Clarke: "Taken over."] If the Government has taken the outfit over, it has taken over "a dead" and not only a dead, but it is helping its capitalist friends because, as I understand it, that undertaking was run by Bookers and it was losing money because the charges were fixed by the Government for the Bartica area. It had to meet the cost of running it from profits earned elsewhere.

2.45 p.m.

If the Government has taken it over, it has taken over a loss. If it had developed cheap hydroelectricity one can understand the logic of such a take-over. Because then it would not cost you anything. But now, having taken it over, the Government is merely subsidising Bookers. That is how we see it. We would like to know from the Government how much it has paid for it, or whether it has got it for nothing. And even if you have got it for nothing it is still a loss because the running cost of it will be a subsidy to Bookers as they were bearing that before.

Sir, I think that this should be one of the priorities of the Government because we know that cheap electricity is not only a facility to people to light and brighten their homes, or to help children, for instance, who have to study at night, but it is a means of generating power for industrial purposes. I am not talking of the big industries. I am thinking of small-scale work whether it is woodwork, or poultry rearing, or shoemaking, or metal working and so on. This is a *sinequa non* for development. It is for this reason I think the Government should give major priority to its development.

21.6.1971

National Assembly

2.45 – 2.55 p.m.

Thus, sir, we would like to know from the Government what are its proposals. We know that the Minister is very clever at making evasions. [*Interruption by the Minister of Finance.*] We are not talking about reports. There are thousands of reports for Guyana. This country is over reported as everybody will tell you. The answer to this is the decision, the plans. [**Mr. Hoyte:** "Why must I tell you? I am not a teacher."] You are the Government; you have a responsibility to the country to tell the people when you propose to have hydroelectricity. Or, if you are not going to provide hydroelectricity, are you going for atomic energy which is equally as cheap? If not, do you intend to continue with expensive steam generators?

The next question is this. How soon will we have rural electrification throughout the country? By this I mean the settled areas, plans for which were laid out since the interim Government by Preece, Cardew and Rider. We would also like to ask the Government whether it has also taken into consideration the bringing in, as was recommended, all the schemes, not only schemes like Bartica and New Amsterdam which they have taken over, but even the estates. Because we know the estates are operating their own schemes and in many cases they do not provide services to the people which can be provided if it was all linked up with the national grid run by the Government. These are fundamental questions we would like to have answered.

So far as cost is concerned, if the Electricity Corporation is making the profits as projected by Preece, Cardew and Rider - and I fail to see why it should not be making those profits if it is run efficiently - \$20 million net profit in the first ten years, \$40 million in the second ten years, it would be in a position to pay its way, and this includes the cost for additional plants and rural electrification. We would like to know if the Corporation is making the profits as projected by Preece, Cardew and Rider and, on the basis of those profits, if it is able to finance the development which was projected, that is, rural electrification and if it is able to provide the charges for further generators etc. for the plant.

I say this because hon. Members will recall that when the Government nationalised the Demerara Electricity Company it was able to get \$18 million worth of credits for two steam generators, buildings etc. This was on the basis of the Report by Preece, Cardew and Rider on

21.6.1971

National Assembly

2.45 – 2.55 p.m.

he projection of net profits which would be earned by the company, in other words, so to speak, self-financing both rural development and plant expansion. We would like to know whether those projections have materialised or whether we have to find money from elsewhere, maybe the Chase Manhattan Bank, to do the job which was supposed to have been done by the Corporation itself.

Mr. Hoyte: Your Honour, I sometimes wish that we can have a real debate in this honourable House, that we can get matters germane to the subject which is on the Order Paper for examination by hon. Members. I find it difficult to reply when hon. Members stray so far afield and indulge in so many postures which have no bearing on the matter before the House.

It is interesting to note the conclusions which have been drawn from a simple piece of legislation which is before the House. We are told that the legislation means that nothing is to be done as far as electricity expansion is concerned in the County of Berbice for another nine years. I did have some slight acquaintance with logic many years ago but it has not helped me in this matter to draw those conclusions which hon. Members have drawn. I find it tragic that matters which should be publicly known and which are known in quarters where people take an interest in public affairs are not known by members of the Opposition.

2.55 p.m.

Your Honour, even now, all over the coast, Essequibo, West Demerara, East Demerara, on the Corentyne, the work of electricity expansion is going on. Right now! Therefore, I find it difficult to understand how hon. Members, who are politicians, who are supposed to be near to the grass roots, who are supposed to understand what is going on in this country, come here and show their utter lack of knowledge. There has been prepared and is being implemented by the Guyana Electricity Corporation, an expansion programme for the period 1971 to 1976, a programme estimated to cost \$77.6 million. In one breath members of the Opposition get here and talk about reducing taxes and in the same breath they call for public expenditure, which they must know would run into very large figures.

21.6.1971

National Assembly

2.55 – 3.05 p.m.

The programme over this period 1971 to 1976 calls for the electrification and revamping of new areas, namely, Corentyne, Wakenaam, Leguan, and Bartica, during 1971 to 1973; the expansion of existing distribution systems in the Essequibo district, West Demerara, and East Coast Demerara, during 1971 to 1973; the integration of the Georgetown and Onverwagt systems during 1972; the reinforcement and uprating of existing systems in Georgetown, Onverwagt and Anna Regina during 1971 to 1974; the construction of 92 miles of transmission lines from Soesdyke, East Bank Demerara to Rosignol, West Bank, Berbice, during 1972 to 1974; the expansion and uprating of the Upper and Lower Corentyne diesel stations by 1976. Those matters represent phase one of a programme of electrification which is intended to reach every centre of population where there are people in sizable numbers.

Hon. Members who are knowledgeable will know that you do not pick up an electricity expansion programme out of a hat. It calls for very careful technical studies and costing. You do not run electricity into places where it is uneconomic unless, of course, in the long run, having regard to Government's overall development strategy, electrification becomes a matter of priority. So it is with the G.E.C.'s electricity expansion programmes. These are matters which have to be examined carefully, and after careful examination, have got to be carried out with a degree of technical competence which will ensure that the end product is what is envisaged in the beginning.

It is to be noted and this is a point which hon. Members of the Opposition seem to have glossed over because, I suppose, they did not want to look at the matter clearly - that the New Amsterdam Town Council, as I have said already, is the undertaker for the supply of electricity in the town of New Amsterdam and even now the Town Council is investing large sums in the upgrading and expansion of that system. Therefore, in order to avoid duplication, the expansion programme skirts the town of New Amsterdam and takes up on the Corentyne Coast going right on to Springlands. It is as simple as that. This Bill envisages within the period of nine years, the system in New Amsterdam may well be integrated into the national grid and that is why it

21.6.1971

National Assembly

2.55 – 3.05 p.m.

provides that the Order shall continue in force for nine years unless it is sooner revoked by order of the Minister. There must be sound reason for putting in that provision in the amending Clause.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition asks about hydroelectricity. Again, anyone who has given the slightest study to the production of electrical power by water knows of the tremendous initial cost and of the wealth of technical details which have to be gathered and assessed before any such project is launched. Water flows are studied sometimes over 20 years in some countries, to establish the fact that there is the necessary water potential. And so, the Government has been working with its expert. Indeed, the expert is the brother of the hon. Member of the Opposition, Dr. Fenton Ramsahoye, Mr. Samuel I. Ramsahoye, who has been working beyond the call of duty on the question of hydro-electricity in this country. That is why, because of Government's overall planning for electricity, a decision has been taken to change over from 50 cycles in this country to 60 cycles. In the near future, legislation will be introduced in this House to prohibit the importation of electrical appliances unless those appliances can operate on 50/60 cycles, because the 50 cycle system cannot integrate with hydro-electricity.

All of these are matters which are being studied and which will be implemented in order to ensure that we have in this country a supply of electricity which is cheap and readily available.

Mr. Speaker, having made that slight contribution, I would ask that the Bill be read a Second time,

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

3.05 p.m.

Assembly in Committee.

Clause 1.

Mr. Lall: Mr. Chairman, one would have thought that the hon. Minister of Finance would have endeavoured to protect the people of New Amsterdam and its environments from the high cost of electricity in that area.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall, we are dealing with Clause 1.

Mr. Lall: I am speaking on Clause 1.

The Chairman: That is the short title of the Bill.

Mr. Lall: I am criticising the extension of the Ordinance because --

The Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Harry Lall, I have drawn your attention to the fact that what we are discussing is Clause 1 of the Bill, the short title.

Clause 1 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2.

Mr. Lall: I should like to draw the attention of the Government to the fact that the residents of New Amsterdam and its environments are paying the highest rates for electricity in the world. That is only one of the problems that face the people in New Amsterdam. The second problem is that the three generators that the council has are 50-cycle engines.

The Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Harry Lall, I should like to draw your attention to what the subsection deals with. We are dealing with the continuing in force of the Order for a period of nine years unless it is sooner revoked by order of the Minister. You will have to speak on that. The matters to which you are now alluding should have been dealt with in the stage prior to this. Kindly confine your remarks to this section.

Mr. Lall: My contribution concerns the extension for nine years because for nine years the people of New Amsterdam will be suffering.

21.6.1971

National Assembly

3.05 – 3.15 p.m.

I was making the point that the council has three 50-cycle engines which are supposed to generate 60-cycle current. In order to get the 60-cycle current the velocity of the engine has to be raised and this causes meters in the area to jump. People who use two lights and a radio have to pay \$45 a month as electricity rates. I have made representation on their behalf. We would have wished to see the Minister give some protection to the people of New Amsterdam. Now that the Minister is extending the Ordinance for nine years he should give the people some protection.

It was stated by the council that it is costing \$50,000 to pump water by electricity and from 1 a.m. to 5.30 a.m. there is no water supply. I bring this matter to the attention of the Minister so that he can pay attention to the problem that is confronting the people.

I crave your indulgence, sir, to point out that the two main roads which the council is supposed to look after -

The Minister of Home Affairs (Mr. Clarke): To a point of order.

The Chairman: Will the hon. Member please confine himself to the Committee stage of this Bill.

Mr. Lall: Mr. Chairman, I was making a point to show you that although the central government voted \$37,000 for roads, nothing has been done to the two main roads.

Mr. Clarke: To a point of order. The hon. Member is out of order. Standing Order 50 (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."

I submit that the hon. Member has not been dealing with the details of the particular clause under consideration and therefore is out of order.

The Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Harry Lall, I have drawn your attention on several occasions that you are not speaking on the subsection before you. Will you kindly confine yourself to the merits of the subsection?

21.6.1971

National Assembly

3.05 – 3.15 p.m.

Mr. Lall: Your Honour, the point I am making is that nine years is too long a period for an extension. I am stating that the period should be reduced to two years.

The Chairman: Will you take the appropriate action?

Mr. Lall: The Government should have a watchful eye on what is going on. It should see whether extension work is going on. My colleague said that in the interest of the country we should have an extension but the central government cannot give a franchise for nine years.

3.15 p.m.

If you give them two years, after the two years when you see no expansion at all, then you take away the franchise. But to give them nine years is further adding to the dilemma of the people of New Amsterdam. Therefore, I am asking the Government not to amend it but to delete "9-year" and include "2-year" so that the people at New Amsterdam would not have to shed tears for the next nine years.

Clause 2, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without Amendment, read the Third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the House.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "That this National Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday, 22nd. June, 1971 at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. [Mr. Ramsaroop]"

Adjourned accordingly at 3.20 a.m.
