

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT
[VOLUME 3]

(cont'd)
38/60

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

12th Sitting

Tuesday, 12th September, 1967.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Assembly met at 2.30 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

Present

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 P. S. d'Aguiar
Minister of Finance.

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. Corrcia,
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. 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. W. G. Carrington

Mr. R. G. B. Field-Ridley

Mr. D. Mahraj

Mr. H. Prashad

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. A. Chase

Mr. B. H. Benn

Mr. Ram Karan

Mr. R. Chandisingh

Mr. H. J. M. Hubbard

Dr. Charles Jacob, Jr.

Dr. F. H. W. Ramsahoye

Mr. E. M. G. Wilson

Mr. M. Hamid, J.P.

Mr. J. R. S. Luck

Mr. D. C. Jagan

Mr. H. Lall

Mr. Moneer Khan, J.P.

Mr. Y. Ally

Mr. R. D. Persaud, J.P.

Mr. E. M. Stoby
Mr. M. Bhagwan

Clerk of the National Assembly — Mr. F. A. Narain

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

Absent

The Honourable S. S. Ramphal, C.M.G., Q.C.,
Attorney-General and Minister of State.

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

Mr. C. V. Nunes

Mr. L. Linde

Mr. M. Poonai

Dr. S. A. Ramjohn

Mr. S. M. Saffee.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE
SPEAKER

LETTER OF THANKS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have received from the Governor-General, a letter expressing thanks for the Resolution passed by the National Assembly on 15th August, thanking him for the Speech addressed to the Assembly on the occasion of the opening of the Second Session of Parliament on 8th August, 1967.

LETTER OF SYMPATHY

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have also received a letter of sympathy from the Eastern Mahacony Village District, expressing its condolences and sympathy on the death of the Speaker.

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

Dr. Jacob: I wish to ask the hon. Minister of Finance Question No. 1 standing in my name on the Order Paper:

- (i) Will the Minister of Finance explain fully why, within the first few months of Guyana becoming a member of the International Monetary Fund, it became necessary for the Fund to provide this territory with stand-by credit of up to US\$7.5 million in convertible currencies?
- (ii) Will the Minister further state what are the terms and conditions agreed to between the Government and the International Monetary Fund under which this stand-by credit will be made available?

The Minister of Finance: (Mr. d'Aguiar):
The answer is as follows:

The hon. Member's question is evidently based on a misapprehension. It suggests that an I.M.F. stand-by arrangement is a desperate measure resorted to only in extremis. This, of course, is not so. Members of the Fund have a right anyway to draw on its resources in case of need. This is the whole purpose of membership. But except

for drawings against the gold tranche, i.e. backed by the member's gold subscription, any such drawing, i.e. drawings against credit, requires the prior approval of the Fund granted after a thorough examination of each request. The effect of the stand-by arrangement is therefore to obtain advance approval for any such drawing up to a specified limit on the strength of the Fund's judgment that the country's economic and financial affairs are being soundly managed. It never became necessary for Guyana to enter into a stand-by arrangement with the Fund, but it was considered desirable in view of the strain on our international reserves which the acceleration of economic growth from a negative figure between 1962 to 1964 to an average of 8% per annum between 1964 and 1966 occasioned. The hon. Member will appreciate that when economic activity - consumption and investment - is low, the level of imports which depends largely on internal demand tends to fall, without a commensurate fall in the level of exports, which depends largely on external demand. The contrary is true in periods of high economic activity. Consumption and investment rise, increasing imports, thus straining the balance of payments. I should add that the stand-by arrangement proves to the outside world that the Government is pursuing sound economic and financial policies, thus creating a favourable climate for capital inflow.

Dr. Jacob: As a supplementary question, will the Minister state definitely whether or not a fundamental disequilibrium existed in our international payments account and whether that was why it became necessary for the Government to seek this stand-by credit?

Mr. d'Aguiar: There is no fundamental financial disequilibrium. There is, on the other hand, a movement towards *pro rata* financial equilibrium.

Dr. Jacob: As a further supplementary question, will the hon. Minister inform the House whether, as a result of a loss in foreign exchange reserves, his Government will not consider the re-introduction of exchange control on sterling exchange transactions?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I cannot allow the question. It is another supplementary question.

Mr. d'Aguiar rose — [Mr. Khan: "The Minister is willing to reply."]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That has nothing to do with the Standing Orders.

Mr. d'Aguiar: I thought the hon. Member was referring to the second part of the question. The answer to that is as follows:

The essential terms and conditions of the stand-by arrangement are:

(a) Guyana acquires the right to draw up to U.S. \$7.5 million over the year 15th February, 1967, to 14th February, 1968 in prescribed stages, if the need arises (the stand-by charge being $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1%, which is counted against interest if any drawing is made).

(b) Any such drawing would have to be repaid within three years.

(c) It is a condition for a drawing under the arrangement that the authorities of Guyana maintain fiscal and monetary policies which are consonant with sound economic growth.

Dr. Jacob: I shall ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister tell us whether, as a result of this credit which is available, the Guyana dollar is not likely to be devalued?

Mr. d'Aguiar: The answer is definitely no.

Dr. Jagan: In view of the fact that the economic survey report indicated that the balance of payments deficit is likely to be greater in 1967 than in 1966, will the Minister say whether it will be necessary this year to resort to the stand-by credit arrangements by the I.M.F.

Mr. d'Aguiar: I do not at present anticipate that any such drawing will be necessary.

Dr. Jagan: Will the hon. Minister state whether he expects the rate of growth, which he referred to as being 7 or 8% in the last year in the gross domestic product, will be achieved in 1967?

2.40 p.m.

Mr. d'Aguiar: Your Honour, it is difficult to forecast exactly the rate of growth, but I do envisage that the rate of growth will continue in the similar high level which has been achieved in the past three years.

Dr. Jagan: Is the Minister telling us, therefore, that the prognosis of the economic experts that the rate of growth is likely to be only four or five per cent in 1967 is wrong?

Mr. d'Aguiar: There are a multitude of prognoses by a multitude of economic experts. But I shall wait for the final figures and I am of the opinion that they exceed the figures mentioned by the hon. Member.

Dr. Jagan: The hon. Minister of Finance has seen this Report before it was published. One presume that before such a Report is published and laid before the House, the Ministry of Finance and more particularly — [The Prime Minister: "Question."] I will put it this way. Did the Minister of Finance see the Report before it was published, and if so, does he refute those figures which were printed in the Report?

Mr. d'Aguiar: I have seen the Report.

REQUESTS FOR LEAVE TO MOVE THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY ON MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Election of Speaker

• **Dr. Ramsahoye:** Article 62 of the Constitution provides that if the office of the Speaker becomes vacant at any time before the next dissolution of Parliament,

the Assembly shall, as soon as practicable, elect another person to that office. In the circumstances, the last Speaker having died on the 4th of August, and the National Assembly having sat on many occasions since then without having elected a Speaker, I think that the time for appointing someone to that high office is long overdue and I crave your indulgence to discuss this as a definite matter of urgent public importance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sorry that I cannot grant the hon. Member's request. I believe the matter is primarily a parliamentary matter and I would suggest that the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Leader of Government's business enter into discussions on this matter.

Dr. Jagan: I am not opposed to having discussions on this matter with the Leader of the House. But one finds that the Leader of the House is like a slippery eel and it is very difficult to get down to discussing anything fundamental. You would recall that it was arranged that the Leader of the House and myself would discuss the question of the composition of the Public Accounts Committee. No discussion took place and over the week-end we saw an article stating what was the composition of this body.

I repeat that we are willing, at all times, to discuss matters relating to the business of this House with the Leader of the House, but he continues to flout common practices of courtesy. I do hope that, on the suggestion which you have made on this occasion, we will be able to grasp him and he will not slip out as he usually does.

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs (Leader of the House) (Mr. Bissember): On the matter which the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned, I wish, for the record's sake, to say that I replied to Dr. Jagan's letter, but before I received the letter he handed it by way of a Press Release to members of the Press. I still replied to the letter and I indicated to him that I would

like to see him some afternoon and discuss the ramifications of this matter.

I may mention that I have tried on all occasions to speak to the Leader of the Opposition on the composition of the various committees. I am happy to say that he has turned out to accept what I originally suggested, and that was that the Committee should be constituted in the same manner as any other committee – [Interruption.] Dr. Jagan was clamouring for the chairmanship of this Committee to go to a member of the Opposition. We have always agreed with him, though in his time, the hon. Mr. Saffee was appointed Chairman of the Committee when he was Parliamentary Secretary, and the hon. Mr. Bowman was also a Parliamentary Secretary and a member of the Committee at that time. I wish to say that I will continue to speak with Dr. Jagan on this matter, but I will not allow him to dictate to me as long as I am Leader of Government's business. [Interruption.]

Dr. Jagan rose --

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All right hon. Member, you have placed your opposition on record. Let us move on.

INTRODUCTION OF BILL

The following Bill was introduced and read the First time:

Constitution (Prescribed Matters) Bill, 1967 - [The Prime Minister.]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

BILLS – SECOND READING

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CHRISTIANBURG/ WISMAR/MACKENZIE COUNTRY DISTRICT) (SPECIAL PROVISIONS) BILL

A Bill intituled:

"An Act to provide for the constitution of the Christianburg/Wismar/Mackenzie Country District, the incorporation within its boundaries of the Christianburg and Wismar Village District and the North Mackenzie Country District and

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER]

matters incidental thereto." [Minister of Local Government.]

The Minister of Local Government (Mr. Cheeks): In moving the Second Reading of the Local Government (Christianburg/Wismar/ Mackenzie Country District) (Special Provisions) Bill, 1967, I shall try to show the House that what Government has decided to do is right and necessary, and I would expect that we will get the unanimous support of the entire House, in view of the fact that we are taking a step which is calculated to redound to the prosperity, not only of the areas involved, but of the whole country.

This Bill seeks to make provision for the combination of the two local authorities on the East and West Banks of the Demerara River, namely, North Mackenzie and Christianburg/Wismar. It also seeks to enlarge considerably the present Local Government area and to include in the new area, not only the parts which are settled areas for housing, but also the mining areas and the areas which are subject to leases. For the first time all of these areas will come under Local Government.

This Bill anticipates future social development and makes provision for it. It would certainly tend to correct the uncontrolled and disorderly squatting which has taken place in certain parts of the area on the left bank, and would provide for the orderly development of a modern township which can become a reality in the foreseeable future. It is for this purpose that the new Local Government area will extend eastwards, even beyond the proposed Atkinson to Mackenzie Highway.

2.50 p.m.

It is appreciated that squatting tends to take place on the roadsides and as this is going to be a very important artery it is necessary at this time for the whole area to be subject to Local Government control.

The combination of these areas is in direct accord with the recommendations of Dr. A. H. Marshall who states in the Report at page 72:

"I recommend that the Wismar-Christianburg-Mackenzie area be made into one local authority."

It is significant that Dr. Marshall also stated, with respect to this area, on page 72:

"... this area is isolated and preparations here can be conducted independently, and the timing of the introduction of the new system settled without reference to the rest of the country." The problem cannot, however, be left alone, if only because the contrast in conditions on the two banks of the river will one day cause serious discontent."

How one economic region could have remained administratively divided for so long is really a miracle. How two levels of society, one enjoying the highest standard of living, the other almost the lowest, could so long exist cheek by jowl is another miracle, particularly in these days when iconoclasm has become a virtue.

It was the physical laying down of the bridge across the river joining the East and West banks earlier in the year that pointed the way clear to the action which I expect this House to take today, that is to make possible the social, economic and administrative bridging of the East and West banks of the Demerara River in the Wismar-Mackenzie area.

It will not be possible for a long time to bring all services to a common denominator but rapid progress can now be effected, not by reducing standards anywhere, but by channelling funds as a priority towards the elevation of the lowest.

I have to state with great satisfaction that none of the bodies, organisations or individuals involved in this exercise raised any serious objections to the idea of unification. It must be said in praise of DEMBA that it positively encouraged local government on the East bank in the area known as North Mackenzie. Once the decision was taken that the Company's

property was to be rated and, of course, included in the local authority for that purpose, the Company itself accepted the decision and took the position that its contributions should flow to both sides.

Finally, it is necessary for me to point out that although we are combining areas which have been recommended by Dr. Marshall we are not in fact establishing a Marshall area. That can only be done when the Municipal and District Councils Bill has been passed. The new local authority, therefore, will operate under the Local Government Ordinance until the time when the Marshall Bill, as we call it, is passed.

I trust that it will be appreciated that in accordance with the Object and Reasons of the Bill special provision has been made for rights of workers to be honoured and observed and for all of the powers, duties and obligations of the two Local Authorities which are being dissolved to be passed on to the new body, so that no one will suffer. I trust that every Member of this Assembly, including members of the Opposition, will support this Bill. I now move the Second Reading.

Mr. Benn: It is assumed by some Members of this Assembly that because one does not live in an area - **Mr. Jordan:** "Or have any votes."] - or, as the hon. Member says, have any votes there, one should take no interest in it. We do not agree with that proposition.

The hon. Minister of Local Government (Mr. Cheeks) gave the impression that the Bill before the House was a measure of very far-reaching importance. The hon. Minister, however, at the end of his speech and as it were in an anti-climax said that the new local authority will be administered under the Local Government Ordinance, Chapter 150. Therefore, aside from the fact that an area which is comparatively more prosperous than another will be combined with it, the Bill does not have any far-reaching

significance. This is not the first time that areas have been put together under the Local Government Ordinance.

3.00 p.m.

The hon. Minister of Local Government is boasting that the important aspect of this legislation is that industry will be rated for the first time. But the hon. Minister does not tell the House - since this is the first time - by what means the Country Authority, which is really the lowest form of Local Government in this country, will be able to arrive at valuation, will appraise the industrial property of this company which, according to the Minister, so generously decided to allow its property to be rated. The hon. Minister must therefore tell the House who will be the appraisers of this property and how they will arrive at the appraisement of this new property for Local Government industrial property.

The next point is that the hon. Minister did not say whether the whole Area, that is as far as Watooka, is concerned. [Mr. Cheeks: "You did not do your homework."] He does not explain whether the whole area from under this Country Authority -- [Mr. Jordan: "Read the boundaries."] The boundaries are written in highly technical language; the hon. Minister must know that. He does not tell us whether this area, the whole area of Mackenzie, comes under this local authority. [Mr. Jordan: "It does."] The "hon. Minister of Wismar", Mr. Jordan, says that it does.

Now the next point I should like to raise is the question of the status of this local authority. The hon. Minister is smiting his breast and giving the impression that he is doing something very wonderful when, indeed, he is setting up another Country District under Chapter 150, the Local Government Ordinance. The hon. Minister said just now that perhaps I did not do my homework and that is why I did not know

[MR. BENN]

that the whole area, including Watooka, came under the new authority, but the Minister of Local Government can always be accused of not doing his homework. If one looks at the statement that the hon. Minister is alleged to have made at the last conference of the Guyana Association of Local Authorities – and this concerns Local Government and Marshall – one will observe that the hon. Minister did not know anything about what he was talking, and to say that other people have not done their homework is to make nonsense of this House. For instance, this is what the hon. Minister said – I am quoting from the *Guyana Graphic* of Wednesday, August 23, 1967:

“Government is to introduce legislation to ensure the collection of arrears rates from defaulting ratepayers.”

This is nothing new. This legislation appears in Chapter 150 and the hon. Minister ought to have known this. [Mr. Cheeks: “I did not say that. I can give you a copy of my speech.”] It is also alleged that the hon. Minister said:

“Under the proposed law, village overseers will be compelled to take action for the recovery of such arrears and will be protected against pressures from defaulting village councillors.”

This is also part of Chapter 150. The hon. Minister should read Section 120 of Chapter 150, so he should be the last person to be talking about people not doing their homework.

I will now come back to the specific point: the question of the Local Authority. It is certainly a very backward step to constitute the local authority under Chapter 150. Under this Ordinance, the local authority which will be a Country District will be subject to the Local Government Board in Georgetown, which Board has the power to appoint and dismiss the overseer,

to remove the councillors for any reason, and even to decide how monies more than a certain amount are to be spent.

If the hon. Minister is saying that this local authority is to be as important, that this is such a far reaching step that is being taken, how is it that the hon. Minister and the Government are constituting this local authority with the shackle of the Local Government Board on all its actions? It certainly is necessary for the hon. Minister to explain this aspect of the Bill to the House. Of course he tried to defend himself by saying in the end that this new local authority will not be constituted under the Marshall proposals.

This, of course, is another matter, a matter in which the Minister had made promises to persons interested in Local Government and to the country that the Marshall proposals for Local Government reorganisation would be put in hand by October last year. When I took him up on this he said it certainly would be done. It is nearly one year later and the hon. Minister has come up with no proposal for the introduction of a Bill dealing with Local Government reorganisation, but he now wants to combine two or three areas under the Local Government Ordinance, Chapter 150, with very little powers to the local authority concerned. Under this combination that the hon. Minister is setting up, the councillors of the area will have to be appointed by the Local Government Board. It will be good for this House if the hon. Minister could let the House know what his thoughts are on the appointment of members to the local authorities. This is very important.

The Minister speaks of the statutory functions of the Board. Under the Local Government Ordinance the annual budget of the local authorities has to be approved by the Local Government Board. According to a speech by the District Commissioner of

East Berbice reported in yesterday's Guyana Graphic, it is clear that the estimate of the local authorities on the lower Corentyne has only just been approved. If it has taken nearly nine months for the estimate of the local authorities on the lower Corentyne to be approved, I wonder when the local authorities all over the country will have their estimates approved. The hon. Minister is certainly dodging the question that Local Government reform entails.

3.10 p.m.

The hon. Minister has been very loud in his statement as to what will be done in regard to Local Government. He has not said anything about the sugar estates which have been settled much longer than the Mackenzie/Wismar area. Perhaps the hon. Minister will let us know what are his thoughts on this but it is necessary for this whole question of Local Government to be given much serious attention than the hon. Minister of Local Government is giving. He is certainly dodging the question.

The hon. Minister has published a Bill in relation to Local Government. He said that this Bill should be looked at by everyone and everyone should comment on it by a certain time and after this Bill is published the next time, everyone should hold his peace in future. Well, we have heard everything like that. But the hon. Minister goes on to announce that the next important step would be the placing of all the Amerindian areas under the control of Local Government. According to what he says, the lands between the Atlantic and the Akarai will come under Local Government and then he immediately goes on to explain, not areas under Local Government, but areas that have not had Local Government for all time.

The hon. Minister is certainly dodging this question of Local Government and he has come up with this Bill which he says is an important measure. It is important in so far

as it only combines an industrial section with a non-industrial section. But the Minister has left many things unsaid and it is unnecessary that he should do this. Those people who feel very happy about this could turn back the pages of Local Government history in this country and recognise that not only at a national level, many serious battles have been fought on Local Government. A combination of certain areas in this country, just 100 years ago, was the direct result of what were described as the Angel Gabriel riots, because some areas were so heavily burdened by taxation that it resulted in this national convulsion.

The hon. Minister of Local Government must take note that when his appraisers arrive at rating these areas at Mackenzie Christianburg/Wismar, that these rates do not impose a heavy burden on the people who are not owners of large property in the area.

As I said, the hon. Minister has many things yet to explain in this Bill. One important matter that the hon. Minister should tell us, apart from the appointment of councillors, is to what extent the local government were consulted before this measure was brought before the House. He may have some good news to tell us but knowing this Minister, there is not much hope that one can get much news. If one could remember a statement by the Chairman of the Guyana Association of Local Authorities at the recent meeting on the 22nd of this month, the Association accused the hon. Minister of not taking the Association into its confidence and discussing this important measure with such an important body.

The only way he can be described by his actions in Local Government is by calling him "reactionary". It is inconceivable that a Minister would go to the extent of disrating a local authority. Not since 1951 – I think the local authority was the Buxton Local

{MR. BENN}

Authority — has any step such as disratement of a local authority taken place. The hon. Minister does not appreciate that Local Government means local control as far as is necessary for the proper functioning of the local authority and the hon. Minister must not jump around and take sides and give the impression that his action in disrating the Craig Village Council, which he did early this year, was an act that meant that he was taking an interest in and protecting the rights of the people.

The hon. Minister has left many things unsaid and we hope that in his reply he will answer some of my questions, — that he will let this House know how he sees this local authority functioning, how he sees other local authorities with similar problems, — local authorities with sugar estates and sugar factories, with estate managers' houses and properties cheek by jowl — according to his words, — with other areas which are poorer; he should tell us how he looks at the whole question, and if it is possible to deal with this matter of Wismar/Mackenzie/Christianburg so urgently, then I think it should be possible for him to give attention to other aspects of Local Government. We look forward to hearing something from the hon. Minister on these matters.

3.20 p.m.

Mr. Hamid: While it is true to say that there has been greater political awakening among people who have gained much administrative experience since 1965 and deserve a full say in their local affairs, it must be noted that the Central Government has even greater responsibilities. It is important to study some of these responsibilities. Instead of creating local authorities which will be able to relieve the Central Government of some of its responsibilities, the Minister is telling us that

he is creating a District Authority. What he is really doing is excluding the firm, with its assets, from this area. The Minister is not telling us this. A local authority that is functioning properly must collect taxes to assist in development.

The Minister is merely creating districts whereby persons will be nominated to administer the affairs of the Government. This is wrong. Under the Marshall Plan more local authorities should be created. The Minister had ample time to create more local authorities. It is not good enough for the Minister merely to bring a Bill to this House with certain revisions of the Marshall Plan. He is showing the nation that, for the long period he has been in office, very little has been done.

I want to mention that local authorities will have to take care of things like education, public health, housing, town planning and so on. These things are presently being done by Ministers. Instead of working according to what Dr. Marshall has stated in his Report, the Minister is doing something else.

Mr. Ram Karran: I rise this afternoon to protest most strenuously to the act of disratement which had been carried out by the Minister of Local Government. My friend, Mr. Benn, has already referred to Craig Village. How can the hon. Minister who was an educationist, a learned person, ask us to support a Country District in the place of an elected local authority? This is a shame.

The hon. Minister told us, and it has been referred to by my friend on my right (Mr. Benn) that for the first time the application of taxation will be made on industrial property, mines, etc. The hon. Minister has certainly been very deficient in not telling this House what it ought to know — the principles on which this monstrosity, this huge Country District will be disrated. What would be the criteria for taxation on the

bauxite assets? What would be the criteria for taxing the huge plant at Mackenzie? Is the Government in a position to provide a tax expert? If so, then reference ought to have been made to this, if not in the Bill, at least in the speech by the hon. Minister. We know a great deal of what takes place in areas such as these.

I heard Mr. Campbell, during the time of the riots saying: "We do not believe in segregation." Mr. Campbell is the Managing Director of the Demerara Bauxite Company. He uttered these words in 1962. But if one goes there now one would see that there is an area that is called "Watooka". Unless you happen to have the complexion of a European or Anglo-Saxon, you just cannot live there. We all know that a Guyanese engineer who was not a European actually went to work there, and was hounded out in the same way as those coloured Guyanese who go to live in an area not far from where I live — I refer to Bel Air Gardens are chased out. This Government seeks in this measure, despite what it says, to perpetuate this system of class and race distinction. Would the Minister kindly indicate to us the methods by which these properties are going to be disrated?

We remember the case of the sugar industry, and my friend did not forget to mention what the sugar authorities are doing. They tell the Government what to do and the Government does it. They could not have attempted to tell us what to do because they knew what the answers would have been.

3.30 p.m.

It is very clear that during the time of the P.P.P. Government there was no "bacchanal" — hon. Members will understand that word very well — about the payment of bonus to sugar workers. It is only since this Government came into office

that the sugar estates can say that they are not paying a bonus to people who have earned it. That is the sort of thing that one expects at Wismar and Mackenzie, on the Demerara River.

Something has been happening in that area for a long time. The vessels that travel up the river have been doing a great deal of damage to passing craft and secondly, to the banks of the River. I assume that Government is going to remove the burden of maintaining this area from the backs of the taxpayers and that such burden — I refer to the rapid erosion which takes place in the Upper Demerara River as a result of the movements of ships — will be put on the Local Authority by the hon. Minister, and that the Local Authority will have the power to demand a toll from the owners of vessels that go up the Demerara River, so that it will be able to carry out the responsibility of maintaining the banks.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Mr. Jordan) is quite conversant with the problem in the country. For a very long time I have said that the responsibility of containing this erosion should not be the responsibility of the Central Government, but of the Demerara Bauxite Company. Now that the mines, the factories and all the works are being included in the Local Authority I hope that the hon. Minister will give the Local Authority the responsibility for checking erosion of the river. I hope, too, that the Local Authority will have the power to levy a toll so that the owners of the vessels that do the damage will assist in the maintenance.

The company, I think, should be expected to pay reasonable taxes for their installations and mines. I think such taxes should bear the same relation to the installations, as the poor man's tax bears to his house, if, let us say, it is valued at \$1,000. There should be a proper rating system and a proper valuation should be put on the factories and mines so

[MR. RAM KARRAN]

that ordinary persons do not have to pay more than they receive in benefits from the Local Authority.

I am sure that the hon. Minister understands what I am saying, and that we will not have a repetition of the very uneven proposal that was put forward by the companies in the sugar industry when they were discussing the Marshall Plan. They wanted to get away with murder. With their huge factories in the area, with their huge lorries, motor cars and all sorts of things going into the area, they wanted the people who lived in the small extra-nuclear areas to be burdened with the responsibility of footing the bill for the roads.

Until the Atkinson/Mackenzie Road is completed – and that will not be for a long time – people will rely on the river to provide water transportation, and even when fast traffic will be using the road, bauxite, alumina and other products of the Demerara Bauxite Company will be transported by river. That is why I urge upon the Minister that this aspect should not be overlooked in this very important Measure.

I am sure that all Members who are looking forward to the day when we will have elections in all Local Authorities will denounce this as a backward measure. The Minister ought to have included some provision for the early establishment of an area with village status rather than this wretched Country District which we are being asked to approve today.

The Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Mr. Jordan): This afternoon we have seen what indeed is one of the worst examples of the barefacedness shown by members of the People's Progressive Party. That they should stand up in this House when a Bill like this is introduced, and have the barefacedness to speak, is something beyond the concept of a reasonable man.

During the years of growth of the Wismar/Christianburg/Mackenzie area, the members of the People's Progressive Party did nothing, and they allowed to develop there a situation which today is a problem for the hon. Minister of Local Government. The then Minister of Labour, Health and Housing, now Secretary of the People's Progressive Party – [*Interruption*]. allowed to develop on the bank of the Demerara River a situation which today is an eyesore, and that the members of the People's Progressive Party can stand up and say that the Wismar/Christianburg/Mackenzie district should not become a Local Authority with Country District status is beyond understanding.

What have they done in the sugar estates, where there are persons who have not paid a cent in taxes while there are people in the villages who have been paying for years and years? They did not dare to do anything and they stand up and talk about what is happening in this area.

The situation that is now developing at the instance of the hon. Minister of Local Government is purely a point of transition. The Mackenzie Authority is a nominated one; the Wismar/Christianburg is an elected Authority. Everything that was done there was done with the full knowledge and consent of both Authorities in order to bring about the unity of the two. There was no compulsion. Everything was done by mutual consent and arrangement.

This is merely a transitional stage which will change. It is as simple as that. To talk about it otherwise is either not to understand or, as we would expect from the members of the P.P.P. to behave, to be determined to deceive.

Mr. Chase: The Local Government (Christianburg/Wismar/Mackenzie Country District) (Special Provisions) Bill is extremely reminiscent of a colonial past

which we have not yet completely got over. I am extremely surprised, indeed astonished that this Government should be introducing a Bill to create such a lowly local authority at such an important part of our country. The position of a Country Authority is indeed a very humble and lowly one. It is a position as defined by the Local Government Ordinance under which the councillors are entirely nominated by the Local Government Board, under which all the acts of any importance of the Authority have to be subject to the approval of the Local Government Board.

3.40 p.m.

Even the District Commissioner has authority to attend and take part in deliberations of a Country Authority.

It is surprising that this Government should seek to establish such a Local Authority in the Wismar/Christianburg area because, if for no other reason, Mackenzie, industrially speaking, the most forward part of this country. The people at Mackenzie, Wismar and Christianburg are persons who have shown, in the manner in which they conduct their organisations, trade unions, co-operatives and welfare organisations, that they are capable of a much larger degree of self-government in their local affairs than this Bill seeks so grudgingly to give them.

I submit that the only reason why the Government has taken this step is really to protect the interests of the Demerara Bauxite Company Limited and the protection of that interest is, in itself, something which we in this House decry, because it is a backward and colonial step which this Government is taking. The Government talks about decolonisation and this very Bill which is before the House this afternoon is a demonstration of a colonial mentality of the Government of the day. It is a demonstration of the Government's

bringing to the interests of the bauxite company at Mackenzie.

How can the members of the Government justify establishing a Country Authority in an area in which people have a high quality of secondary education, in an area in which people have a high degree of skill, in an area in which people are competent and proficient in their trade, in an area in which literacy is high? How can they justify establishing a nominated system, a system in which the people would not have full charge and control of their affairs, in an area such as Mackenzie/Christianburg?

I say that the only reason for this is because the Government wishes to protect the interests of the Demerara Bauxite Company Limited. It wishes to know that when any rates or taxes are levied it would have the overriding powers to say: "You should not have power to tax the bauxite company as you like — tax its lands, its buildings and its operations, because you are not fit enough to do so." We on this side of the House cannot subscribe to this sort of talking-down to the people of Wismar/Mackenzie/Christianburg area because it is insulting to them to put forward a measure such as this at this time of our history.

The Marshall Report has been in the hands of the Minister of Local Government, and indeed the Government, for some considerable time. I notice that the Minister of Local Government has made a departure in this Bill from the step which he took with regard to the last Local Government measure which was published. The last Local Government measure which was published gave sufficient time to people all over the country to express their views on the provisions of the Bill.

This Bill was published for the first time in the *Official Gazette* of the 2nd September, 1967. We are being asked today

[MR. CHASE]

12th September, 1967, ten days later, to give our approval to this measure. I ask what is the reason for the difference in the procedure? Were the people — I ask the Minister a very positive question which I hope he will answer — of Wismar, Christianburg and Mackenzie consulted about this measure? Does this measure have their full support, or are their differences of opinion among them with respect to the provisions of this Bill? I ask whether the Village Chairmen's Conference and the other authorities connected with Local Government were consulted with regard to this measure and whether it has their full and undivided support.

The Minister who just took his seat sought to place blame for certain matters in the Demerara River foreshore on the past Minister of Health. I believe that he wishes to hide the facts completely because he must be aware that the past Minister was responsible, or the past Minister under the P.P.P. Government was responsible for action not being taken to deprive people at Wismar of their livelihood by their being ejected from their houses which would have been completely destroyed. I am sure he must be aware of the interest which was shown and the steps which were taken by the previous administration with regard to house lots for the people in the area and even the beginning of a modicum of a housing scheme at the time of the P.P.P.; nor can he be unaware of the establishment of new postal service buildings in that area. He must not try to throw dust or make cheap political party points on issues such as this.

The question of Local Government is a serious one which should be approached with some sort of national consensus. I think that now that we have attained political Independence, we should all be agreed on

the point that Local Government should be established throughout this country in the areas in which it does not exist, and that the people should have a measure of autonomy and self-government so that they may control their own affairs.

We cannot, at this stage of our history, now that we are supposed to be politically independent, set about establishing in enlightened and progressive areas such as Mackenzie, Christianburg and Wismar, authorities which are subject to the overriding control and jurisdiction of the Local Government Board. The Local Government Board itself is an anachronism, and I would have thought that we would have been witnessing the complete liquidation of the Local Government Board and the system than to be called upon to participate in a Bill which seeks to perpetuate such an abominable system in this year of our Lord 1967; this is indeed very painful.

My friend is talking about 1957 to 1964. He knows very well that the whole ambit of Local Government was subject to investigation by Dr. Marshall, that a certain report was put up and a considerable amount of local work had to be done in respect of that report. He knows very well that the legal draughtsman from the United Kingdom butchered the Bills which had to be introduced and they had to be completely redrawn by local personnel. He must know this, and this is partly responsible for the delay.

I say to the Minister that very little is being done in Mackenzie, Wismar, Christianburg and, indeed, the whole field of Local Government in respect of training personnel in the field of sanitation, health and welfare — very important fields which we have to undertake. A Country District will not have authority over the very

important fields of Local Government, such as education, health, agriculture, youth work, housing and planning.

3.50 p.m.

A country district will not have the autonomy to deal with these very important areas nor would it have the autonomy to levy rates and taxes on its own volition without being circumscribed by the Local Government Board. Things such as parks, housing, hotels, accommodation and education cannot be undertaken by a country district and I should have thought that an area such as Mackenzie, Wismar/Christianburg ought to have been elevated to the status of a town and given the right to elect councillors, who would have a full measure of autonomy over their local affairs. I should have thought it would be *infra dig* to establish in such an area, a country district, and that the minimum the Government would have done for such an area would be to give it the status of a town, and we would have been giving to the people of Wismar/Christianburg Mackenzie a measure of self-government which they deserve.

The last hon. Minister who took his seat spoke of this measure being an interim one. This is making an approach in the same sort of way as our colonial masters did. This is making a kind of approach in which the Government is saying to the people: "You are not now ripe enough to manage your affairs. We have to be paternalistic." This is highly unsatisfactory. I say it is an insult to the intelligence and the state of literacy of the people of Mackenzie, Wismar/Christianburg. [The Prime Minister: "Those people are so bright, they won't vote for the P.P.P."] There is nothing in this Bill to suggest it is an interim measure, it is not intended to be transitory, I am sure it will take five or seven years as a trial period

before the status could be elevated. I am saying that there is no need to start that area at the lowest level of local authority.

If this is the Government's attitude towards a developed area like Mackenzie Wismar/Christianburg, I shudder to think what will be its attitude towards other areas which are not as developed, by any stretch of imagination, as that area. It is unfortunate that the colonial mentality of the Government should demonstrate itself in this way. This is a forerunner of other Bills which will come and is indicative of this, that in areas with sugar estates, the Government intends to establish the same sort of arrangement in which the Local Government Board will have authority over the country districts which will be set up to deal with property which belongs to the sugar producers of this country. If the Bauxite Company can get the protection the Government has given them in this Bill, what greater protection would not the sugar magnates get when the Government comes to introduce Bills which will deal with areas in sugar estates.

The protection which the Government has given lies in the fact, that the authority does not have autonomy. This country district will be subject to the overriding authority of the Local Government Board. Every act of importance by the Mackenzie Wismar-Christianburg Country District will be subject to the approval of the Local Government Board before implementation and I say that this is paternalism in the extreme. It is an attempt to downgrade the people of the area completely.

What is worse is the fact that the people of Wismar already enjoy the right to elect councillors to their local authority. Under this Bill, the Government is taking away this right and councillors will be nominated instead. What is the justification? What errors have they committed? What faults

[MR. CHASE]

have they committed for this right to be taken away from them? It is clear that this Government has no faith in the democratic process, and this is where we must join issue with the Government because it is the beginning of things to come. It is the beginning of dictatorship.

The Government intends to dictate to the people of Wismar/Christianburg who, in the past, had the right to elect councillors to their Local Authority. The Government will now appoint whom it thinks should represent them. I say this is a backward step and there is no justification whatsoever for removing the elected process which is already in operation in Wismar/Christianburg and reverting to the decadent system of nomination.

It is true that the people of Mackenzie now have a nominated board but I should have thought that having regard to the initial experience in the field of Local Government, that the stage had been reached where they too ought to have been removed from the position in which their representatives are nominated to the position in which they would have the right to elect councillors under universal adult suffrage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think it is time to suspend the sitting.

Sitting suspended at 4.00 p.m.

4.45 p.m.

On resumption —

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mr. Chase.

Mr. Chase: The Greater Mackenzie Trust is another sore point. There are a number of people in the greater Mackenzie area who are dissatisfied with the sort of financial hand-outs which they get from this Trust. I

think that this is another means of manipulating finances in order to prevent the people in that area from getting their just deserts from the properties which the company has in that area. I should hope that that system would very shortly be discontinued, and such properties as are owned by the Trust would be subjected to the normal system of taxation as other properties owned by private persons.

I think that some people seem to misunderstand, perhaps deliberately, the system by which the Demerara Bauxite Company will be able to exercise control over the Country District which is being set up. Obviously, the people who are going to be nominated to this Country District will be, in a large measure, employees of the Demerara Bauxite Company. Since the company cannot prevent this change from taking place in our system of Local Government, it seems that the next course is to monopolise or commandeer and manipulate the machinery of Local Government, and this is where the employees, many of whom could be subservient, will be used to ensure that the interests of the company are not interfered with.

In conclusion, I wish to say that because of the retrograde nature of this Bill, I hope that when it becomes an Act, it will not remain on our Statute Book for long, and that the people of the Christianburg/Wismar/Mackenzie area will soon be able to enjoy the status of a town so that they can have an elected council and full self-government in all their local affairs.

Mr. Lall: In introducing this measure in Parliament, the Government, in no uncertain terms, showed its dictatorial attitude towards the people who come under the system of Local Government. I assume that when the hon. Minister gets up to reply he will put forward the argument that the

people are clamouring for this, and that is why the Government saw it fit to bring this Bill before this House. We feel that this retrograde step should not have been taken. We feel that there should have been a Village District so that the people could have had the opportunity of exercising their franchise; they could have elected their representatives according to the dictates of their conscience.

But what do we observe? Today, Guyana is free from the yoke of colonialism. Instead of throwing colonialism behind their backs, they are nurturing neo-colonialism — a new form of colonialism — in our country. This shows clearly where Guyana is heading. If the Government wanted to bring the people together it could have brought a Bill to allow the people to come under a Village District — three local authorities — and to elect representatives of their choice. Instead of that, they are bringing DEMBA within this area. Who will assess the rates that DEMBA and the ratepayers will have to pay? The local authority?

4.55 p.m.

What will happen if employees of DEMBA are appointed to the Country Authority? They will do whatever their employer asks them to do. Both in Georgetown and New Amsterdam, elections have not taken place since 1958. We are told elections are pending. Why is it that the Government did not see fit to bring forward legislation to have democratic elections in Georgetown and New Amsterdam? We only hear the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Cheeks) shouting about Local Government elections. From 1965 he has been speaking about it and now we are in 1967. Nothing has been done to ensure that we will have democratic elections in Georgetown and New Amsterdam.

Instead we see that the Councils in these two areas are being packed with lackeys of

the Government. To keep some of the boys quiet, the members of the Government pitchfork them into positions; but if some of them were put before the electorate they would not obtain a vote.

I suspect that the Government does not wish to have elections in these two areas, Wismar and Mackenzie. It wants to appoint its friends. It could appoint them; there is nothing wrong with that, but don't let it appear that a dictatorship is being established.

I understand that the Local Government Board will have supervisory powers over this Country Authority. Let us ask ourselves this question: Who appoints the Local Government Board? The Government puts persons on the Board and it is obvious that such people will have to act in accordance with the orders given by the Government or changes will be made as we are seeing in other directions. On Old Year's Day, for instance, a Police Chief was appointed. The year is not yet finished and the Government wants to roll his head. I wonder whether the position will not be the same as far as the Local Government Board is concerned. The members of the Board have to act in accordance with the dictates of the Government. Democracy in Guyana is on trial. It has been replaced by dictatorship. I am asking the Government to practise democracy and not to abuse it. Let us build in Guyana a democratic society of which we could be proud, and let us give the lead to other Caribbean countries. I implore the Government to amend this Bill and to give the area the status of a village district where people would have the right to elect their representatives.

Mr. Wilson: I know that my colleagues have covered a lot of ground during the debate on this very retrograde Bill, but I wish to speak in order to emphasise certain very important principles.

[MR. WILSON]

In the first place we observe that we are taking a retrograde step. We are moving from an elected body, insofar as one part of this new Country Authority is concerned, to an appointed body. We have moved into the position of an Independent country and in the same manner the Government should move to give greater autonomy to the country areas. I rise to emphasise this point for the benefit of hon. Members on the other side so that they should be able to appreciate that they are moving in reverse gear where the administration of Local Government matters is concerned.

Secondly, one would have expected that in setting up a local authority in the Christianburg/Wismar/Mackenzie area greater powers and more autonomy would have been given to the local authority concerned. All we see in this Bill is that the same amount of authority and power that was enjoyed by the two separate authorities in the past will be transferred to the new Country Authority.

Now, a bigger body is being created and one would have expected that in keeping with the recommendations of Dr. Marshall we would move forward and give greater powers to the local authority that is set up. This Country Authority should not be subjected to control or supervision by the Local Government Board.

5.05 p.m.

We in this country are moving backwards sadly – in trade unionism, Local Government and in everything. This country is now independent and greater authority ought to be given so far as local administration is concerned. The central Government should be proud to hand over more and more authority to the people because it has greater responsibilities to take care of. It has external affairs to look after,

it is burdened with the responsibility of carrying on its affairs and it ought to occur to its members that it is contrary to the interest of the people of the country to deny them having greater autonomy in the administration of the local affairs.

How are you going to train the people to take their proper places in the central Government in an independent country? [Interruption by the hon. Prime Minister.]

You trained them to participate in centrally directed thuggery. But the people are now prepared to throw off that sort of training which they got in 1962, 1963 and 1964 and are quite prepared to undertake something more positive, something more responsible.

Now, are they going to have the right to have their own Police Force? We see that many crimes are being committed in the area there. What about education? Are they going to be able to administer schools? What about public health? Are they going to be subject to detailed supervision by the Ministry and the Medical Department? What about social assistance? All these things should be handed over to the Local Authority there. They should look after their own old age pensioners – public assistance. They should be given more and more training at the local level, but here it is, we find that this Government, rather than moving forward, is moving backward. It is disgraceful that this Government should take such a backward step now that we are independent.

Mr. Luck: This Bill, like the proverbial curate's egg, is good in parts and one would have wished to say that this Bill marks a landmark in the social and political advance of the peoples of this country. Here we have, for the first time the company town which was Mackenzie, yielding up however grudgingly, to a local authority which is to be managed by Guyanese. I would hope that the same principle of incorporating the

entire Mackenzie area into one area will be applied when we come, as we must come, to deal with the sugar estates.

It will have escaped no one that Mackenzie, like Katanga, creates vast social, economic and racial problems and it really ought never to have happened that these areas should have been outside the control of the people who live there. I urge that when we come to deal with the sugar estates areas, the entire assets of the estates, for the purpose of tax, will be included within those village areas and so on. For the first time we will see that the white people of Watooka will now have to go and be treated in no way different from the humble people of Wismar.

It is for this reason that this Bill ought to have been a landmark in the history of this country. But why is it not a landmark? It is not a landmark because of the clear inefficiency and incompetence of the present holder of the office of Minister of Local Government who promised Local Government elections two years ago. Since last year we heard, in this House, the hon Minister of Local Government declaring firmly that elections will be held under the Marshall plan not later than Christmas of last year.

What is the significance of having elections; If the elections had gone through under a new electoral Bill, then this Area would not have attained the lowest possible status. It is clear that Mackenzie should have been declared a town. My hon. Friend tells me that to be declared a Country District is not the lowest. I want this House to know that, in dealing with these matters, you can declare an area a city then you can declare a place a town, then you can declare a place a village district, then you have a country district and then a rural district.

The hon. Minister could well have claimed some measure of achievement for bringing in the vast assets of DEMBA within

the confines of a local authority [The Prime Minister: "That is what he has done."] He has not even the wit to claim that, although it is a valid claim, but the claim must lose much of its merit because this area should have been declared a town I understand that the reason why this area has not as yet been declared a town was because, if it were declared a town elections would have to be held.

5 15 p.m.

With due respect to the hon. Minister of Local Government, I should submit that this very area could have been declared a town with the immediate holding of Elections. In due course, I shall read a section of the law which shows clearly that the framers of this Bill took no cognisance of our laws. Under this Bill, the Village District of Wismar is to be dissolved and will have a lesser status. The laws of our country provide clearly in what circumstances the disratement of a village can proceed.

One would have thought that the awful failure in the case of Craig would have impressed itself on the Minister's intelligence that the disratement or dissolution of a village has to have certain prerequisites. They were never followed in the case of Craig. [The Prime Minister: "What did the Court hold in the case of Craig?"] Do not worry with that now As I said, what we are doing is disrating the village of Wismar and this is what Section 70 of Chapter 150 states:

"(1) Where twelve registered voters of a village district, or the Board, represent to the Governor in Council that the further continuance in office of the village council is prejudicial to the welfare of the inhabitants of the village district, the Governor in Council may direct an inquiry to be made by a person appointed by the

12th September, 1967

*Country District . . . 4
Special Provisions*

[MR. LUCK]

Governor, at which inquiry opportunity shall be given to the councillors and to the inhabitants to be heard in the matter of the representation, and the Governor in Council may after such inquiry, by order published in the Gazette, declare the village council to be dissolved."

It is clear in my submission that the Village Council of Wismar has by this Act been dissolved and the prerequisites and the circumstances antecedent to this dissolution have not been complied with. This is the Parliament of this country and we can override — [Interruption by the Prime Minister.] When you are finished speaking, I shall speak. [The Prime Minister: "What is the date of the P.P.P. Congress?"] One wonders about the position of the elected members of the Village Council. [The Prime Minister: "They concurred. They are P.N.C. supporters.

As a former hon. Member, Dr. Richmond, said, we make the laws here and we should observe them and we should not abandon them to private whim and caprice. Let us made wise laws and let them be observed. The fact that the people of the area — adulators as they are of a wooden idol — may be content to accept anything at the hands of this government is not good enough. What we do have laws for? We are dissolving the Village Council. I hope the hon. Minister will comply with the provisions of Chapter 150.

We understand, on this side of the House, that the reason this vast area, the wealthiest area of this country, is to be given the lowly status of a Country District is to comply with these laws. I should like the hon. Minister in reply to say why the district has not been declared a town. I should say that the hon. Minister of Local Government was

misadvised when he was told that, and he acted in the belief that this area could not have been declared a town. Chapter 151 provides all the information concerning the dissolution of a town council and it is time that the hon. Minister should become acquainted with the laws.

Under these laws, a town council can be dissolved and commissioners appointed to run the town if it was in existence at the time. What is wrong with declaring a town where there is no Council and appointing commissioners to run its affairs? Members would be elected. [Mr. Cheeks: "That is being dishonest"] If my hon. Friend is correct, that this Parliament can do everything except make a man a woman there is nothing wrong in declaring this area a town and amending all laws consequent on the making of this area a town.

5.25 p.m.

I should like him to explain his justification for declaring the leading area in this country a mere Country District.

In spite of the heckling from the other side — [The Prime Minister: "Look at the definition in Section 2."] My hon. and learned Friend over there is only making noises. He is not contributing and will not contribute to this discussion. We are making laws now and if the Definition Clause has this, we could amend it.

The point made by my hon. and Learned Friend, Mr. Ashton Chase, is valid. If this measure is to have the significance and the importance we would all like to see attached to it, surely the powers of the local authority which is to govern this area should be as wide as the powers which are exercised, for instance, in the City of Toronto. It would have been a significant advancement if this local authority were to be charged with the provision of education, housing and

all the other things which are the normal functions of local authorities. But such is the nature of this Government that, having "bludgeoned" DEMBA into accepting that its entire assets will now have to come under local control, it has to reassure its capitalist friends that really and truly this is, like so many of its measures, a mere facade of progress. That is the significance of this measure.

Who cannot see that Mackenzie is not properly declared a Country District! If Mackenzie is a Country District, then New Amsterdam should be declared a rural district. By any test the revenues in New Amsterdam cannot amount to much. The only things they produce there are mosquitoes, and their principal export has been Mr. Kendall. I mean no disrespect, sir, to the sleepy town of New Amsterdam. I like to see life, vitality and progress, and those are what Mackenzie stands for. We, on this side of the House, would like to see emerging around Mackenzie a vast industrial complex in which the people who live there play a leading and important role. But what do we find? The Government brings everything – the mines, the factories, the white peoples' houses – into one area, and then it says that this area is meaningless, it is a mere Country District.

I want the Minister of Local Government to explain to this House what were the legal difficulties involved in making this area a town. It is self-evident that this area should have been made a town. When we examine why this was not done, we find that, in spite of the braggadocio of its leader, the Government withdrew when it came to the real crux of the matter. So, this victory of theirs is, like many of their other victories, inconsequential, insubstantial.

My hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, seems to think that our individual presence here is all that matters. For myself, I know that one

thing is certain – [The Prime Minister: "Death"] We shall all – [The Prime Minister: "Have our heads rolled."] – not be here, and it matters not how long we are here but how well we played our parts when we are here. If past experience is the guide, it might well be that men of outstanding merit will lose their places here, and that some who are of no consequence may retain their seats for a much longer time.

In conclusion let me say this. For too long has Mackenzie been run as a foreign enclave where the rights of white people have been held sacrosanct. All the racial tension in this country, in the eyes of all thinking people, must be attributed to the harsh discrimination practised in the Wismar/Mackenzie area against people of Negro origin. There has never been action without a reaction, and the racism that has been so rampant, the discrimination that has been so abominable, led unfortunately to the situation where other people think it is right to discriminate and be as viciously racial as the white people. Therefore, since this may be considered a move towards the normalisation of relations at Mackenzie, one would also hope that it is a move towards normalisation of relations elsewhere.

5.35 p.m

It sometimes happens that "X" does to "Y" a wrong that is grievous and intolerable, but "X" is so strong that "Y" takes umbrage and vents his spleen on "Z" who has done him nothing. That has been the history of the Mackenzie area. The bridge is the historic barrier. I remember visiting the area as a boy on an excursion trip. Very curious as I was then and as I always will be, I went up to the bridge and – [*Interruption.*] – as the hon. Prime Minister said, there was a man looking like me on the other side of the barrier and he passed for white. There was I claiming equal privileges with the other

[MR. LUCK]

fellow. That was not allowed. The barrier came down very firmly.

Political rascality will not, I hope, when it comes to embodying areas adjacent to the sugar estates, lead the Government to dismember the sugar estates, their factories and even their land from the logical areas. I hope they will all be taken in and properly taxed.

May I say that such are the complexities of national politics in this country that one possible solution to the present impasse as I was explaining to the gentleman only a while ago, would be to confer on these local authorities and District Councils wider powers so that all, irrespective of their race may play some legitimate part in the processes of Government. I would like to see the local authorities managing education for instance. They could not mismanage it more than the gentlemen opposite are doing. If they created a strong system of decentralisation I think that we all – [Interruptions.] I say that decentralisation of power, moving it out from Georgetown to various areas, is a prerequisite for peace, harmony and progress in this country.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I think you can conclude by addressing us on Bill No.17.

Mr. Luck: I thought that I was speaking on Bill 17. May I be permitted to explain further so that we can all understand where we are. I am saying that Bill 17 deals with the creation of local authorities and I am saying that measures like this are very essential. Let there be local authorities covering, for instance, the whole of the eastern Corentyne district. With the creation of local authorities, everybody in every section of the country and in every part will be allowed to play a part in the affairs of this country.

Today is a happy day, I hope, for the people of Wismar and I look forward to the day when genuine representation of the people of Wismar will come up through this system of decentralisation of authority

In conclusion I want to say that one of the things which have been obstructing this country is that the large companies, DEMBA and Bookers, have always preferred to deal with one or two persons. The "pay off", the bribe, is smaller if they have to give only to one or two people. We are genuine democrats and therefore I should like an assurance from the hon. Minister of Local Government that this is but temporary measure and I would ask him to give a positive assurance to this Assembly. I ask him: "When will Mackenzie, which is a vast area, be made into a town, and when will elections be held to the councils of the area?"

Mr. Cheeks (replying): I am saddened and shocked that members of the Opposition should oppose a measure like this which is calculated to combine into one area for its more efficient functioning, a stretch of land which represents one geographic, economic and administrative region I would not have conceived that hon. Members opposite could have taken up such an attitude to this Bill.

There are just a few points which I should like to dispose of. The hon. Member Mr. Luck said that we should have made this area into a town and should have provided legislation for that purpose. He referred to Chapter 151 I think when hon. Members who have the authority of the Bar at the back of their names come to this House they ought not to mislead the House deliberately. Section 2 of that Chapter defines "council" as Georgetown or New Amsterdam.

The hon. Member (Mr. Luck) referred to section 15 of Chapter 151 which allows for dissolution of councils, and was suggesting

that Georgetown could have used this piece of legislation to dissolve the councils of North Mackenzie and Christianburg/Wismar. The hon. Member knows quite well that that section deals exclusively with Town Councils and not Village Councils or country district councils. It could not be used.

The hon. Member also referred to section 70 of Chapter 150. That section prescribes that under certain special conditions a Village Council can be dissolved. In the present case, dissolution became necessary as a result of a request from the local authorities for combination. We had to find means to combine them and this law makes that provision. One was Country District and the other a Village District. If the previous Government has not abolished elections it would have been possible for us to elevate one then combine them and establish a new Village District and hold elections. It is the abolition of elections by the previous Government that forced us to adopt the procedure we have adopted here to combine the two areas.

We had to use this particular process here because of the fact that a new elections law is not yet passed. I should also say that the people of the Area requested and demanded it. When I was moving the Second Reading of this Bill I pointed out that everybody concerned — the local authorities, all bodies, organisations and individuals — wanted this to be done. Therefore, it was done. In other words, this piece of legislation will prevent a repetition on the Mackenzie side of what was done on the Wismar side.

I should like to mention another matter. There still seems to be some doubt in the minds of some hon. Members opposite as to the areas which are to be included under Local Government in this new Area. I wish to repeat that the areas to be included are all

residential areas on both banks of the river, both the areas at present occupied, including Watooka and Richmond Hill, those that are intended to be used as residential areas, the aluminium plant, the workshop and several of the mining areas. There is no particular part of the Area where the boundary lines have been drawn which has been excluded. It is particularly intended that all of the property of the Demerara Bauxite Company Limited within that Area should be included in the local authority area so that it may be valued and rated.

So far as the appraisers are concerned, I think it was the hon. Member Mr. Benn who spoke about the appraisers — who are appointed by the local authority they do not have to get the approval of the Local Government Board. The local authority will, I presume, appoint competent valuers to value the property of the bauxite company so that it will be rated and the amount of rates and taxes that it pays will be based on a fair valuation of the property there.

The next point to which I will refer is the question of status. I have already pointed out that it is the intention of this Government to have elections in all the Local Government areas throughout Guyana. When this elections Bill is passed all the villages, except those areas which are to be "Marshallised" — Georgetown, New Amsterdam, one area on the Corentyne and this Local Government Area — will have their elections. This has been explained time and again. I have given the Local Authorities, the unions of Local Authorities and the public in general until the middle of September to submit comments.

This Bill is so complex and so important that we have thought it fit to let the public see it, read it and understand it before it is passed into law. We are receiving comments. We want to give them time before it is brought before the House. Are the members

[~~MR CHEEKS~~]
[~~MR BUCK~~]

of the Opposition going to condemn us for having given time? I do not understand them. [Dr. Jagan: "You promised elections in 1965."] It is true that we promised to have elections earlier but there is a lot of work involved. The members of the previous Government were in office for seven years and they did absolutely nothing at all. They cannot claim to have performed one single positive act concerned with Local Government and they come here to condemn us because we have not established Marshall areas as yet. Actually we have established Local Government in many new areas.

The next point raised was the question of consultation with local authorities. The local authorities reached a stage where they were actively seeking unification. They come down to the Ministry, write letters, and send telegrams. They themselves saw the value of this exercise. When I went up last February on the occasion of the opening of that bridge I realised that the people had seen, in the laying down of that bridge, a physical symbol of union and they looked forward to the time when the areas on the two banks of the River would be joined under one administration. We have done what the people want. Only about two weeks ago they sent down very strong reminders inquiring what was holding up the passage of this Bill which I have brought before the House. The two local authorities sat together and ironed out all their points. They had certain differences and they were all – as far as I know settled amicably.

These are things which the members of the Opposition can find out if they wish, but it is irresponsible for them to stand here and say that we have not consulted the people and we are acting like dictators. We are consulting the people and we are trying, at every step, to do what the people want.

One other point to which I will refer is the question of the sugar estates. The only comment I can make on that is that the reason why the previous Government did nothing is contained in the following quotation in the Marshall Report – and I will just quote a few words that Dr. Marshall used on page 68, Chapter XII:

"For many generations the population on the estates has relied upon the owners for government services – roads, drainage, dispensaries, antenatal clinics, refuse collection, sanitary control, welfare and community work, libraries, play-grounds, and hospitals. The estate has provided the land for the schools, all staff houses and a deal of the remainder of the housing. No payments have been made by the inhabitants for these services; they have all been charged against the cost of production. Thus there has come into being a class 86,000 strong, who have become accustomed to receiving without charge all those services and amenities which in other parts of the world are normally provided out of some form of taxation."

That gives the answer why the previous Government did not touch the sugar estates. I beg to move that this Bill be read a Second time.

Question put, and agreed to.

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

Clause 2

Mr. Cheeks: May I draw your attention to a typographical error in the third line of the definition of the word "employee". The word "this" should be substituted for the word "the".

The Deputy Chairman: The hon. Minister has drawn the attention of the House that the word "this" should be substituted for the word "the" in the third line of the definition of the word "employee". [Mr. Hubbard: "The taxpayers pay \$4,000 a

month to the Attorney-General to put things right.”]

Amendment put, and agreed to.

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

Clause 3 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4.

Mr. Luck: I should like some explanation under this Clause. After all, I shall not bother with it.

Clause 4 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 5.

Mr. Luck: All the employees of the previous authorities of the areas which are now merged will be entitled to similar terms and conditions in no way less favourable than those since terminated. I understand there is a grievous disparity in the rates of pay between the employees of Wismar Village Council and the employees of the North Mackenzie Authority, or whatever they may call it. I understand that the senior employee of the North Mackenzie Authority receives salary and “perks” in excess of \$1,500 a month. I want to know from the hon. Minister, — [Mr. Cheeks: “What he gets?”] — impossible that you should ask that; you receive “perks” every day, what is the meaning of this. Here we are merging four different authorities. One authority is paying for the same work, salaries in excess of what the other is paying. I want the hon. Minister to assure this House that one of the officers, the highest paid officer of this country district — [Mr. Cheeks: “If you want an answer, sit down.”] You listen to the question first — will not be paid a sum in excess of that paid to the Town Clerk, for instance, in Georgetown. The Engineers can give us an indication concerning equalising the rates paid by the Christianburg/Wismar Village District with those paid by the North Mackenzie Country District.

Mr. Cheeks: I think that the hon. Mr. Luck has asked, for the first time, a fairly intelligent question. [Mr. Luck: “Let us hear a fairly intelligent answer for the first time.”] I have to inform this House that hitherto, the contributions made by the Demerara Bauxite Company to the North Mackenzie Country District were confined to the North Mackenzie Country District and up to now none has gone to the other side of the river. That is why it is possible for the salaries on the eastern bank, that is, the Mackenzie side, to be much higher than salaries on the other side. As from now, the gentleman on the west bank of the river will be employed by the new authority; patronage will ease, and payment in the form of rates and taxes will be made to the new local authority. I am informed that that detail has already been settled.

Mr. Luck: The hon. Minister has acknowledged that the employees of the Christianburg/Wismar Local Authority are paid much less than the employees of the North Mackenzie Country District. Clause 5 (1) seeks to put all employees in this position: Consequent on the establishment of this new area, everybody’s service is terminated but he may take employment from this new authority on terms and conditions no less favourable to him than those of his service so terminated. Let us take the case of the Village Overseer of Wismar and the Village Overseer of North Mackenzie, if the one at Wismar receives salary at all, I would assume his salary is about \$100. The gentleman who carries out equal functions and has equal status in North Mackenzie would be in receipt of salary in excess of \$800. The attitude of the new authority towards the man from Wismar would be, take the \$100 or leave.

I heard *sotto voce* interruptions that this matter has been solved but Clause 5 (1) does not give the impression that it has been

[MR. LUCK]

solved. [Mr. Bowman: "Those people have to settle it there. Everything cannot be put there.] It is an unfortunate law. It makes no sense at all. This Clause reads as follows:

"The Country Authority shall afford to every employee whose service is terminated as mentioned in subsection (4) of the preceding section an opportunity of serving the Country Authority, with effect from such termination, upon terms and conditions which taken as a whole are not less favourable to him than those of his service so terminated and the last-mentioned service shall, as if it were such service of the Country Authority as aforesaid, be reckoned for the purpose of ascertaining such leave as may be due to him under the said terms and conditions."

I want to ask the hon. Minister what steps have been taken, because this Bill takes no step at all, and how he intends to adjust the status and pay of the Village Overseer of the Wismar/Christianburg Local Authority to those of the Overseer of the North Mackenzie Country District because, unless there is an adjustment, the \$100 man who goes over to the Mackenzie area will be equivalent to a porter.

6.05 p.m.

What have you done about these unfortunate people? Surely my friend was suggesting that some different arrangement than is envisaged has been entered into. That is the significance of what that gentleman who was elected on this side, and crossed over, has said. Why in Heaven's name the arrangement was not put into this Bill? What difficulty is there about it? We are joining together in holy matrimony four different authorities where the rate of pay for the same type of work is different. It is hopeless to speak to you all.

Dr. Jagan: The Minister said that this matter was resolved after consultation. If the Minister was involved in these discussions, surely he must have the answer. We are not saying that you must put it in the Bill. We are asking for information. How did you or the Ministry resolve this problem? He cannot sit mum. This is the purpose of Parliament – to get answers to questions.

Mr. Cheeks: If the two local authorities feel that they have settled the matter and are satisfied, I am satisfied.

Dr. Jagan: What kind of answer is that? We are asked here to agree to legislation. We see a problem. The Minister did not point it out. We ferreted it out. Surely the Minister can get the answer from the officers behind him. We are not trying to stir up a hornet's nest. We want to see how this problem has been solved. I see no reason why the Minister cannot give an answer. If he had said that he did not know about it, that would have been a different matter. The fact is that the two local authorities are forming a merger, and in the process of merging, these problems must have been discussed.

Mr. Cheeks: It is not possible for me to inform this House exactly how much each one got. If the Member wants to know that, he can submit a written question.

Mr. Luck: The Minister has said that the rates of pay for the same type of work were different. These bodies are now to be merged. How do we equalise them? In order for us to vote intelligently on any measure we must have the information that surrounds the measure. Surely it is a reasonable question. What is being done to equalise these peoples' pay? What happens to the overseer at Wismar, for instance, who would be getting \$100 and the steno-typist at North Mackenzie who would be getting \$250? Would we take the overseer to shine the shoes of the steno-typist at North

Mackenzie? What is being done? Clearly, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition said, this matter must have come out in the preliminary negotiations, and if the Minister were alive and active and not sleeping he would have been able to tell us what is the position.

Mr. Hubbard: Touching on this particular aspect of the Bill is the greater Mackenzie Trust which DEMBA had constituted —

The Deputy Chairman: Are you really speaking on Clause 5?

Mr. Hubbard: This is on Clause 5. The employees of DEMBA must be involved in this. We would like the Minister to tell us how the staff of the Greater Mackenzie Trust is to be integrated into this, and how the people on the other side — the local authorities — are going to reach this side — DEMBA employees?

Clause 5, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported with an Amendment to Clause 2; as amended considered; read the third time and passed.

THE PETROLEUM (PRODUCTION) (AMENDMENT) BILL

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Petroleum (Production) Ordinance” [Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources.]

The Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Mr. Jordan): The Petroleum (Production) (Amendment) Bill is nothing more than a tidying up operation. In the original Bill which was passed, it was laid out that licences would be given, but in keeping with modern practice in developing countries like ours, it has been found necessary to change these to leases. In some

respects, we have issued leases to companies which we have dealt with over the past two years. This step is now being taken to put ourselves in complete order and leases will be issued in all cases retrospectively. That is all I wish to say, and I formally move the Petroleum (Production) (Amendment) Bill, 1967.

Mr. Hubbard: I appreciate the brevity of the hon. Minister’s remarks because, indeed the Bill seeks to do what should have been done when the original Bill was passed.

6.15 p.m.

That Ordinance was assented to on the 18th November, 1939 and subsidiary legislation was made under it. It is significant that the subsidiary legislation provides that in respect of royalties and rents, the charges should be very low. Rents for land held under lease commence at 25 cents per acre and royalty on oil won is at the astonishingly low figure of 72 cents per ton 2,240 pounds. [*Interruption.*] The Minister tells us that this is revised, but I did not raise this point to suggest that this is what is operating at the present time. I did it to point out that a seemingly progressive piece of legislation was passed by a colonial government in Guyana under instructions from a Tory Government in the United Kingdom and it was done to vest all mineral oil rights in the Crown. Now that we are independent I would like to see the Government embark upon legislation which would do something like this to other mineral wealth lying upon and under our land.

Last week the Minister (Mr. Jordan) tabled the Report of the Lands and Mines Department for last year and it disclosed that on a value of \$5 million of diamonds, the royalty collected amounted to \$89,000, whereas in respect of bauxite \$44 million worth of bauxite yielded royalties

[MR. HUBBARD]

amounting to \$280,000. Bauxite mined on land which is held freehold is not subject to royalty at all. Similarly \$3 million worth of alumina yielded royalty amounting to approximately \$54,000. We are tidying up legislation on petroleum. None has been won and my guess is that no capitalist company will find oil in Guyana although it exists.

I should like the Government to consider providing this type of legislation to cover our other mineral assets. I unhesitatingly give the assurance that if similar legislation as is provided in the Petroleum (Production) Ordinance of 1939 is applied to other mineral wealth of this country, it will have the full and unreserved support of this side of the House. I commend that to the hon Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Mr. Jordan) and suggest that he try and persuade this Government to adopt that suggestion.

Mr. Jordan (replying): I have heard what the last speaker has said and I can assure him that the practices that prevail and that will prevail will be in the best interest of a developing country like ours.

I now move that the Bill be read a Second time.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

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

ADJOURNMENT Sitting of the Assembly

The Minister for Parliamentary Affairs (Leader of the House, Mr. Bissember: I move that the Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday, 19th September, 1967 at 2 p.m.

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Jagan): May I make an observation. Wednesdays, as you know sir, are reserved, when Government business is not urgent, for Members' Motions. The Opposition has tabled several Motions during this Session and I notice that it is now becoming the practice of the Leader of the House to by-pass Wednesdays. I don't know what is his intention, but it does seem that he is doing so in order not to debate these issues. I would urge him not to by-pass Wednesdays and, if Government has no business on those days, to bring forward those Motions so that they can be debated.

Mr. Bissember: As I indicated this afternoon to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, there are only three Motions tabled by the Opposition and they are now being processed. They were tabled on the 9th September. Today is the 12th. that are tabled must be processed before they can be placed on the Order Paper and unless they are placed on the Order Paper there is no use in calling a meeting on Wednesday. We dealt with one Question today

I give my hon. Friend the assurance that when we get through processing these Motions I will indicate to him, a week in advance, that they will be put on the Order Paper, but they cannot be put on the Order Paper until they are processed.

The point I am making is that there are only three Motions now. Those that were tabled in the previous Session have lapsed. We will deal with these as they come up. Unlike my hon Friend when he was on this side of the House, we will try to get these Motions put on the Order Paper when they are processed and we will give them

12th September, 1967

sufficient notice. When we decided to deal with his Motion I asked him what day suited him and I caused it to be put on the Order Paper for Wednesday. I give the assurance that we will deal with Private Members'

Motions in due course.

I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn until Tuesday, 19th September, 1967 at 2 p.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 6.26 p.m.