

**THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 6]

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

19th Sitting

2.00 p.m.

Friday, 22nd December, 1972

**MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
SPEAKER**

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

Members of the Government

People's National Congress

Elected Ministers

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

Dr. the Honourable P. A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development and Agriculture

The Honourable M. Kasim, A. A.,
Minister of State for Agriculture

The Honourable H. D. Hoyte, S. C.,
Minister of Works and Communications

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

The Hon. Miss S. M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Information, Culture and Youth

The Honourable B. Ramsaroop,
Minister without Portfolio and Leader of the House

The Hon. D. A. Singh,
Minister of Health (Absent)

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

The Hon. C. V. Mingo,
Minister of State for the Public Service

The Hon. W. Haynes,
Minister of Co-operatives and Community Development (Absent)

The Hon. A. Salim,
Minister of Local Government

Appointed Ministers

Hon. S. S. Ramphal, S. C.,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Attorney-General (Absent)

The Hon. H. Green,
Minister of Public Affairs (Absent)

The Hon. H. O. Jack,
Minister of Mines and Forests (Absent)

The Hon. Miss C. L. Baird,
Minister of Education (Absent)

The Hon. F. E. Hope,
Minister of Finance and Trade

Dr. the Hon. K. F. S. King,
Minister of Economic Development

The Hon. S. S. Naraine, A. A.,
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction

Parliamentary Secretaries

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

Mr. P. Duncan,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of National
Development and Agriculture

(Absent – on leave)

Mr. J. R. Thomas,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Information, Culture and Youth

Mr. C. E. Wrights, J. P.,
Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Works and Communications

Other Members

Mr. J. N. Aaron
Miss. M. M. Ackman, Government Whip
Mr. O. E. Clarke, Deputy Speaker
Mr. K. Bancroft
Mr. N. J. Bissember
Mr. J. Budhoo, J. P.
Mr. L. I. Chan – A – Sue
Mr. E. F. Correia
Mr. M. Corrica
Mr. E. H. A. Fowler
Mr. R. J. Jordan
Mr. S. M. Saffee
Mr. R. C. Van Sluytman
Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen, J. P.
Mrs. L. E. Williams

Members of the Opposition

People's Progressive Party

Dr. C. B. Jagan,

Leader of the Opposition

Mr. Ram Karran

Mr. R. Chandisingh

Dr. F. H. W. Ramsahoye, S. C.

Mr. D. C. Jagan, J. P., Deputy Speaker

Mr. E. M. G. Wilson

Mr. A. N. Hamid, J. P. Opposition Whip

Mr. G. H. Lall, J. P.

Mr. M. Y. Ally

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, J. P.

Mr. E. M. Stoby, J. P.

(Absent)

Mr. R. Ally

Mr. Balchand Persaud

Mr. Bholu Persaud

Mr. I. R. Remington, J. P.

(Absent)

Mr. L. A. Durant

Mr. V. Teekah

United Force

Mr. M. F. Singh

Mrs. E. L. Ambrose

Mrs. L. M. Branco

Independent

Mr. R. E. Cheeks

Mr. E. L. Ambrose

Mrs. L. M. Branco

OFFICERS

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

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

The National Assembly met at 2 p.m.

/Mr. Speaker in the Chair./

Prayers

22.12.72

National Assembly

2.10 - 2.20 p.m.

2.10 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

LEAVE TO MEMBERS

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted to the Hon. Member Mr. Duncan, and the Hon. Member Mr. Sutton for today's sitting.

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

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Jagan): Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I wish to request leave of the House to move the Adjournment of the Assembly on a matter which I regard to be of definite urgent importance. I wrote you about this today, and that is, with respect to the resumption of bombing by the American Government of both North and South Vietnam.

As I stated in my letter, this is a matter on which there is not very much disagreement, there should not be much disagreement in this House. Since I wrote you, I notice the Prime Minister has himself issued a statement. I do feel that this bombing not only is posing serious danger to life and limb and property of the people of Vietnam but also poses a danger to world peace. I hope at the appropriate time leave will be granted for me to move this Motion.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, my own opinion is that it is not one that qualifies under Standing Order 11. In addition to that, I find myself in a peculiar position, that by arrangement and agreement between the Hon. Leader of the House and the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, we had agreed to adjourn at 4 p.m., so I find myself on the horns of a double dilemma, the second one not being an important one. Whilst I agree that the matter is one of tremendous importance, I feel it does not qualify under the other limb of Standing Order 11.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

APPROVAL OF ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE 1973

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply to resume consideration of the estimates of expenditure for the financial year 1973, totaling \$277, 712, 944.

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

The Chairman: The Ministry of Works and Communications (Communications), pages 108 and 109.

**HEAD 34 - MINISTRY OF WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS
(COMMUNICATIONS)**

Question proposed that the sum of \$399,236 for Head 34, Ministry of Works and Communications (Communications), stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Subhead 6.

Mr. Wilson: Subhead 11.

Mrs. DaSilva: Subheads 7 to 13.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: The sum of \$1,680 is being sought as a subsidy for the ferry services in the Barima, North West District. I wish to draw to the attention of the Hon. Minister the difficulty passengers find when crossing with this ferry service. The boat is owned by one Mr. Rodney who has not been able to provide accommodation for the passengers when using the ferry service.

For instance, there are no life jackets in the boat which is of course a danger, secondly there is no proper seating accommodation on this ferry service. As a result, passengers find themselves in very serious difficulty. The additional difficulty to that is that the ferry landing is so bad that there is only a log, at times, which the passengers have to walk on and, as you will appreciate, the log tends to be very slippery because it is on the mud flat. As a result, there is always a difficulty and a danger to the passengers using the service.

While I am on this point, I wish to seek your permission to deal with the steamer service from Georgetown to Morawhanna. The "Northcote" which is being used for the North West District run can be described as an eighteen century steamer doing a twentieth century service. Because of the volume of passengers using the steamer, it is very congested. Because of this, it is creating serious problems for the passengers. The journey takes between eighteen to twenty hours. Passengers have to join the service from Georgetown to reach the North West District. Although there have been numerous complaints about the conditions on this boat, the situation is getting worse every day. Because of the time factor, the passengers have to spend overnight on the boat and there is no proper accommodation.

I wish to ask the Hon. Minister if he can indicate to the House how soon will a better service be provided for the residents of the North West District, and if the Hon. Minister can say whether a bigger boat will be provided.

Mrs. DaSilva: On subhead 7, Contribution to International Civil Aviation Organisation, this is costing us \$21,040. I want to ask the Hon. Minister if any thought has been

given to the matter of the airlines tax which I spoke about in the Budget Debate. I suggested in all seriousness that the tax is too high. Some comic in the New Nation evidently thinks that I cannot count. Ten per cent of \$50 is \$5. Can the Hon. Minister tell me where anyone can go on an international airline, and of course, you have to return to Guyana, for \$50? The nearest places to Guyana are, Surinam, which costs \$144.80, so it would be \$14.48, Trinidad, \$120.60, and Manaus, \$199.

2.20 p.m.

It is not extraordinary for people in all walks of life to visit their families overseas. We have many relatives and friends in other countries as the Hon. Minister and the Government know from the overseas vote. People go to see their relatives.

The fare to Toronto is \$675.40. This means a tax of \$67.54 will have to be added to that. A return passage to London costs \$550 which means a tax of \$55. And so I could go on. This tax is far too high.

The Jamaican Government had thought of putting on a 10 per cent tax on fares below \$100 (J) and 15 per cent on fares above \$100 (J), but representations were made by the airlines and the people in Jamaica. The Jamaica Government therefore reconsidered it and reconsidered it in relation to our getting opportunities of visiting with Caribbean neighbours. It imposed the tax I spoke about, that is, \$5 on tickets costing up to \$50; \$10 on tickets from \$50 to \$100 and \$15 for fares over \$100. The tax goes no higher than \$15 whether you buy a ticket costing \$1,500 or \$3,000; the ceiling is \$15. Can the Hon. Minister say whether any thought has been given to this matter?

I now refer to subhead 13 on page 109, which deals with National Insurance. I am not questioning the National Insurance Scheme, but I want to ask the Hon. Minister a question. I spoke about this last year in the matter of National Insurance.

I imagine that the Ministry of Works and Communications, like many other places, employs many casual workers. Let us say there is a person who is not employed on the regular staff; he may do a day's work this week or work for a few hours on three days each week for one person. That one person does not have to pay National Insurance for the casual worker because he does not work the minimum number of hours for that week. However, if you take the man's overall earnings for that week he would qualify to come under the National Insurance Scheme.

When I spoke about it last year I was referring to gardeners but there are other categories of workers. This happens on the waterfront. I wonder if it happens in the Ministry of Works and Communications and, if so, what is done about it. Both the N. I. S. and the Government lose when these persons do not contribute to the scheme. Will the Hon. Minister say whether any thought has been given to this matter? The Hon. Minister, Mr. Carrington, told me last night that the four or five employers should each put a contribution to make up the employer's contribution and that one person should hold the card. You are not going to get people to do this. Both the worker and the Government suffer as the Government does not get the revenue.

Can the Hon. Minister say how the Ministry of Works and Communications handles this matter?

Mr. Wilson: Subhead 11, Contribution to Regional Shipping Council. We are not against regional co-operation, but I have grave doubts as to the benefit which we are getting from the contribution we are making to the Shipping Council. I would like the Minister to say whether the ships concerned ply to the port of Georgetown. Why benefits do we get from participating in the Regional Shipping Council?

The Minister of Works and Communications (Mr. Hoyte): Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud made some complaints about the ferry service at Barima. I have no knowledge of the truth or otherwise of those allegations. If they are true, well then, certainly I

will give the necessary instructions to have the service improved and to have the person who operates the service comply with the requirements of the law.

There was also a complaint by him about what he calls the North West District ferry. Of course, there is no such ferry. I take it he refers to the service which we render between Georgetown and the North West District. Again, these are all matters for investigation. One does not build a ship overnight nor does a ship cost a penny. But in the Development Programme there will be provision for an increase in the shipping services which we operate in the country.

Mrs. DaSilva raised a question on the airline tax proposed by my colleague the Hon. Minister of Trade and Finance in his Budget Statement. She wanted to know whether Government has given any consideration to the proposals which she made in the course of the general debate.

It seems to me, as I recall those proposals, she was objecting to a tax of 10 per cent on the value of the ticket, but sought to encourage the Government to do as the Jamaican Government had done and collect \$5 on \$50. If there is a difference that is new mathematics. I was brought up in the old school and I do not understand the new approach to mathematics.

She raised a question on the National Insurance Scheme. She wanted to know how the Ministry of Works and Communications treated casual workers whose employment might be on the basis of hours, or who might not have a full week's work. My answer to her is that we deal with these people in accordance with the existing legislation. There is an onus on the employer to deduct certain sums having regard to the amount of money paid to that person over a stated period and to match the amount deducted in accordance with the regulations.

The Hon. Member Mr. Wilson raised a question on the contribution by this Government to the Regional Shipping Council, subhead 11. I wish to say that this amount is a token amount

22.12.72

National Assembly

2.20 - 2.30 p.m.

which the Government pays to the Regional Shipping Council as an earnest of the Government's commitment to the concept of regionalism.

Guyana did not become a member of the Regional Shipping Council because we were of the view that the services run by the Council did not really help us in that the ships did not come to Guyana. But we are regionalists and therefore we sought to demonstrate our commitment to regionalism in tangible terms.

2.30 p.m.

But even so, we do attend meetings of the Regional Shipping Council one of which was held recently in Georgetown. I would state that Guyana can benefit from the very important work which the Council does.

As a matter of fact, in pursuance of a directive given by the Council to W. I. S. C. O. earlier this year that Corporation has introduced a trunk line service which touches the Ports of the main Caribbean countries, that is, Kingston, Bridgetown, Port-of-Spain and Georgetown. This is the beginning of an experiment in trying to see whether we can have a regional service which serves the needs of the Carifta countries a service which is based upon a business-like but nevertheless a national principle.

Mrs. DaSilva: The Hon. Minister did not answer the question and give an explanation again to the citizens of Guyana about the N.I.S. Everybody knows that we pay for N.I.S. I asked if the Works and Communications Ministry employs any category of workers who do not come within the first scale. I forgot my N.I.S. scale sheet at home. So I cannot remember what is the lowest first rate. If a man only works for \$15 as a casual labourer with the Ministry -- *[Interruption]* I do not have the scale sheet but Mr. Durant tells me \$10.

The Chairman: The law states that up to \$10, so much so that whatever amount you work for you will have to pay N.I.S.

Mr. DaSilva: But these people who work for several people in a week whose total wage would come up to more than \$20 or \$30, how will their cards be kept?

The Chairman: I understand what you mean. What you are saying is if a person works for two or four persons, say as a gardener one day part-time with me and part-time with you what will be the position with him.

Mr. Hoyte: Mr. Chairman, I fail to see how I can give the Hon. Member any answer other than the one I have given her already. It is obvious that the confusion springs in her own mind. She has admitted that she does not understand the N.I.S. regulations.

Mrs. DaSilva: On a point of correction. I did not say that. I said I did not have my scale sheet with me. I did not say that I did understand.

The Chairman: She said she did not remember the rating.

Mr. Hoyte: Correction, sir. Her memory is at fault at the moment. She refers to N.I.S. payments as revenue, which it is not. We are bound by law and we collect N.I.S. contributions in accordance with those regulations. I do not know what other answers I can give.

The Chairman: We wasted too much time on this page when we have more important matters.

Head 34, Ministry of Works and Communications, (Communications), \$399,236, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

HEAD 35 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS**POST OFFICE**

Question proposed that the sum of \$3,025,868 for Head 35, Ministry of Works and Communications, Post Office, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Ram Karran: A very short question on subhead 1, item (17).

Mrs. DaSilva: Two very short questions generally on Post Office.

Mr. Wilson: Subhead 1, items (5), (22) and on the next page subheads 8 and 18.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Subhead 1, items (8), (9), (18), (25), (27), (28) and - -

The Chairman: I propose to finish this Division by 4 o'clock. Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran.

Mr. Ram Karran: Subhead 1, item (17). This seems to be a very wapping figure, 35 posts have been abolished. It is true that the legend says it was done some time ago. But I do not recall perhaps the Hon. Minister will tell us where these posts were put. In any case even if I did not make that point, I wish to draw to the attention of the Hon. Minister the fact that even if the number of posts have been reduced by 35 the original figure of 70 remains in the 1972 and 1973 figures under Personnel.

Mrs. DaSilva: the first one is about telephones. It is just to put this item under the right head. Because when I tried to ask it under Local Government I was told that it belonged here. There are no two ways about it, post offices – telecommunication is responsible for telephones. The telephones in the country especially are being destroyed and the people in the country are far

more dependent upon it in time of sickness and death they go to those telephones and find they are damaged by vandals. I made a suggestion but, of course, they never like to take suggestions from the opposition. I know absolutely nothing about electronics, I can read, and I have been made to understand that there is some type of electronic device available to put in the door of the telephones booth and this can help to bring this type of vandalism to an end. I wish the Hon. Minister can go into it.

2.40 p.m.

The other matter I wish to talk about in the post office is this question of parcels. We have been asked to make many sacrifices in the interest of building our nation. By a large people do not mind, people are doing it. Sometimes it would appear to me that the members of the Government take an undue pleasure, one can almost say they are sadists, in trying to make the citizens of Guyana suffer unnecessarily. I have with me a post office notice about an unsolicited gift which came to someone in Guyana. It is a cake, it came from Madeira. I have another similar thing but this applies to gifts from Madeira. One was a fruit cake, one was a Portuguese cake called boldamel. For the benefit of those who do not know, it is a cake made of molasses and walnuts - -

The Chairman: Perhaps it has Portuguese wine in it.

Mrs. DaSilva: It has no wine in it. The fruit cake might have, but there are other people in other countries - -

The Chairman: Boldamel has wine.

Mrs. DaSilva: I can argue with you, sir, that it has no wine because I know how to make it.

The Chairman: So do I.

Mrs. DaSilva: There are other people overseas whose gifts will be coming into Guyana. I want the Hon. Minister to tell me, an unsolicited gift, why are they not allowed to have it. Is it because fruit is banned, or is it because it is a country that is a possession of Portugal, or is it because items are banned and they are not allowed into Guyana?

The Chairman: May I ask you Hon. Member for my own benefit. What about Mateuse Rose Wine, which is banned from Guyana. Supposing I had a case sent to me. What would be your reaction to that?

Mrs. DaSilva: I would say that a case is an awful lot of Mateuse Rose to have, but if you have one bottle like in the case of this cake. I would ask the Hon. Minister, does the Government intend to make the citizen suffer unnecessarily? One fruit cake won't kill the economy of the country.

The Chairman: What is the principle of the matter? Would it not be the principle?

Mrs. DaSilva: The principle of the matter, we appreciate wine is banned. Fruit is banned. We know what is banned. This is Christmas, or it is a birthday, or it is a wedding. In everything there is an exception. I am not talking because this happens to come from Portugal. It is an unsolicited gift. It does not interfere with the trade or with the economy of the country. Could not the Hon. Minister through the Cabinet see what can be done about this thing? There is no need to see the citizen suffer unnecessarily.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Item (8), Chief Postmasters, and item (9), Senior Postmasters, I am using to point out what seems to be very prevalent among postmasters. There have been within recent times very many incidents of fraud by postmasters, or alleged fraud, fraud to the extent that some have been convicted, alleged fraud that some are before the court. There must be

something wrong with the system which would allow that type of thing to happen so often by these particular categories of Governments officers. Would the Hon. Minister say what is being done to police the system properly? What is being done to reduce this high incidence of fraud by postmasters?

Item (18), Expenses – Police seconded for Duty at G.P.O. I note that the Approved Estimates for 1972 showed \$7,512 and during the year six additional secondments were made in 1972, so for 1973 we are asking for \$26,180, nearly four times as much money. It would appear with six additional secondments, the strength of the police seconded for duty at the G.P.O. is now going to cost quite a substantial sum of \$26,000. Where are these police employed? One would have thought they would be sent around to catch the “choke and rob” and to stop the high incidence of crime, but they seem to be doing duty to stop criminals from stealing there. Why was it necessary to increase the strength from two to eight? We bear in mind also that this increase has been though justified in spite of the fact that lower down on item (24), there are watchmen, who are five supernumerary constables, in addition to these eight policemen.

Moving on to item (25), Porters, again the 1972 Approved Estimates have provided for \$15,990. The 1972 Revised Estimates had \$12,578, but for 1973, the enormous sum of \$64,310 is being asked for. And the legend states: “Forty additional posts created by Supplementary Estimates” so that whereas before there were ten bodies, there are now fifty bodies. The porters have increased in strength from ten to fifty. Will the Hon. Minister explain the reason for this increase? What will these porters be doing, bearing in mind there are policemen and watchmen?

2.50 p.m.

I hope he will explain the terrific increase.

Mr. Chairman, moving on to item (27), Postal Agents. Here we see a significant decrease. Maybe this has something to do with it. In the absence of any explanation we do not wish to

surmise and guess. In the 1972 Approved Estimates the sum provided was \$65,000. In the Revised Estimates it went down considerably to \$37,329 but in the 1973 Estimates the provision is to be increased to \$70,000 in spite of the fact that in 1972 it is envisaged that only \$37,000 will be spent.

If we spent only \$37,000 in 1972 why are we providing \$70,000 in 1973? Are we not perhaps over-riding, bearing in mind the sum which seems to have been spent over the two previous years. In 1971 the actual amount was \$41,843. In 1970 the actual amount was also \$41,000. It is likely to be \$37,000 in 1972. Why in 1973 has the vote gone to \$70,000 when it is anticipated to spend only \$37,000 this year?

Item (28), Causal Messengers, Postal Assistants, Watchmen, etc. Again I note that the sum of \$163,832. Is the Revised amount to be spent in 1972. In 1972 the provision is revised to \$163,832 but all the Ministry is asking for in the 1973 Estimates is \$139,300. I merely want to ask the Hon. Minister if he thinks this amount is realistic, bearing in mind that the Revised Estimate for 1972 is \$163,300. Will \$139,000 be enough?

Turning over to page 95, I have just one general question on subhead 7, Uniforms. During this year we heard a lot of dissatisfaction expressed in respect of the issue of uniforms to post office personnel. Perhaps the Hon. Minister will tell us the reason. What has been done about it? Does he think that next year the same dissatisfaction will arise or have steps been taken to remedy the situation so that there will not be a recurrence?

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, subhead 1, item (5), Regional Controllers. I do not want to ask who holds these posts. I just want to get some information on the principle of integration of the service. I hope I am not wrong but I think this is the post which has been causing some worry in the Post Office between the Post Office Workers Union and the Public Service Association. I think the time has come when the service should be integrated, when persons who work in the manual part of the Post Office Department once they show the necessary administrative ability,

can be promoted. Some of these people acquire qualifications after joining the service. Many of them could not get their G.C.E. before they joined the Post Office Service. After joining the Post Office Department they passed the General Certificate Examination.

I think the time has come when the postal service ought to be integrated, when officers can move from the manipulative side into this administration and even go right up to Postmaster General. I know the Postmaster General will not be a block in anybody's way. It is a principle that if people are working in any service they must have the feeling that once they display the necessary ability and competence they ought to be able to go right up.

I now skip the other items and go to subhead 8, Postal Training. I would say that, if necessary, the postal employees ought to be helped with some kind of training. Whether it is done locally or in the Caribbean or whether through some larger administration, they should be given the necessary training.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Wilson we have to finish this Head by 4 o'clock.

Mr. Wilson: I would like you to take a note of how many minutes I am spending on this. When I was Minister I established a Postal Training School. It was a very low category at the time just dealing with apprentices and postmen. It was the P.P.P. Government's intention to develop this school so that officers in the Postal Service could be given all the training necessary to equip them to hold the highest post in the department and I would like to urge the Minister and the Government to try to capture this vision and make it possible for the man who join the Postal Service as apprentices to feel that if they have the competence they will reach the highest position.

I would like to link item (22), Postal Apprentices to item (29), Casual Postal Apprentices. The problem is that a youngster may serve as a casual postal apprentice; he is taken on at a

certain age but if he attains the age of 16 without being appointed an apprentice then he goes out. All his experience, and the training that he got, is lost.

I think that there again the Postal Training School could assist and that the practice of terminating the services of the casual postal apprentices at a certain age limit ought to be discontinued.

Mr. Hoyte: Mr. Chairman, may I with your leave deal with the questions raised by the Hon. Member Mr. Wilson first of all because I think they are important questions which need to be clarified.

He raised a point about the Regional Controllers. Now, this is a new post which was instituted this year and filled this year. There are three Regional Controllers, one for Demerara, one for Berbice and one for Essequibo. These are officers who are able to deal with problems on the spot, thereby preventing the delays and frustrations which arise when one has to refer everything back to Georgetown to the Postmaster General.

Moreover, their office is very important in exercising supervision and control over the postal administration within the three counties I have referred to. This is one of the steps taken to ensure better supervision and to reduce the incidents of fraud which were referred to by the Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh.

The Hon. Member, too, suggested that the service should be integrated. May I point out to him that Government has been well ahead of him in this matter? We have had, during 1972, for the first time in the history of the postal services the elevation of employees from the ranks of postal apprentices or messengers to senior administrative positions in the hierarchy of the service. For example, we have had appointed this year an Assistant Postmaster General who started as a messenger. We have also had, from the same ranks, a Regional Controller, a

22.12.72

National Assembly

2.50 - 3.00 p.m.

Superintendent of Offices and an Assistant Superintendent of Post Offices. So that while the Hon. Member prefers to talk on this matter this Government has been acting.

He raised a question about training. I would wish to assure him that the training school which he established is still in existence and is still functioning. Indeed, it has been expanding rapidly to deal with the growing volume and complexity of the postal service.

Moreover, training has been extended to include all ranks including the ranks of supervisors, postmasters and postal supervisors.

3.00 p.m.

Moreover, we will be taking part in a scheme of regional training which is being established. Next year in Jamaica there will be a training scheme for the region for postal employees and we will be participating in that scheme.

The Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran wondered why under subhead 1, item (17) there has been a reduction of 35 posts in the Estimates. The reason is quite simple. With the establishment of new towns the postal assistants have been elevated to the rank of postmen.

The Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva objected to the fact that the customs did not allow into this country an unsolicited gift, namely a cake, which originated in Madeira. I thought it was well-known by now that in pursuance of a Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations Guyana, in common with most countries of the world, has placed sanctions against Portugal. *[Interruption]* No goods originating from Portugal whether it is supposed or alleged to be a gift or not, can properly under our laws enter into this country.

The Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh raised a number of questions. I will deal with them generally. On the one hand he suggested that we should improve our system of controls within

the postal administration to reduce the incidents of frauds; on the other hand, he objects to the strengthening of the security section within the administration. I do not understand the inconsistencies. He pointed to the fact that the provision for porters was increased. There is no magic about that. Because if one looks at item (28) one will see that there is a corresponding reduction in the casual employees. The answer is that a number of casual employees have been elevated to the post of porters. They are now employed on a permanent basis, and their emoluments have been increased, their conditions of service have been improved. This represents generally the points upon which I choose to answer.

Head 35, Ministry of Works and Communications, Post Office, \$3,025,868, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 112.

**HEAD 36 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS
(COMMUNICATIONS) TRANSPORT AND HARBOURS**

Question proposed that the sum of \$1,893,998 for Head 36, Ministry of Works and Communications, (Communications) Transport and Harbours, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Wilson: I should like to ask a few questions and make a few comments on this head.

Mr. Ram Karran: I should like to use the head to deal with a number of points relating to the deficit.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, the East Coast railway has been closed down. Buses are supposed to be operating the service. That is, public transport. The Government even before it

22.12.72

National Assembly

3.00 - 3.10 p.m.

knew that it intended to close the railway discontinued giving a franchise to bus operators on the East Coast. The Government does what I call lop-sided planning. It closed the railway and did not make provision to take care of the traffic. They did not take a survey of the traffic population that commutes on the East Coast and what capacity of buses will be necessary. If you travel on the East Coast you will be distressed to see large numbers of persons suffering in the sun and the rain, up to this morning I had to assist some of the people. It is really distressing. Secondly, no sheds are provided and they use the railway stations for the purpose of doing party work. There is a P.N.C. office at the Enmore railway station.

I should like to ask the Hon. Minister whether he is satisfied with the Berbice and Demerara Ferry Services. Here again there is lop-sided planning, the road has been improved, but there are the ferries acting as bottlenecks. You get to the stelling and you see that a large number of cars cannot go across. It is almost a waste of funds to improve the roads when you have the Rivers acting as bottlenecks to the flow of traffic. I should like to ask the Government to look into this question and to improve the facilities for cars etc. to cross at the ferries. Perhaps the time has come when it must at least think of bridging the Demerara River.

3.10 p.m.

This question has been mooted many years ago and I wonder whether the Government is thinking of it in view of the serious traffic hold-up of cars and the like on the Demerara River.

I would like to ask the Hon. Minister what is the position with regard to the harbor service, that is, inspection of the private launches and private vessels that operate on the rivers. A very serious tragedy occurred early this year where five persons were drowned and I think this is an indication that the harbor service is not doing its work properly, that this vessel should be allowed to be playing there consistently. They call it the paper launch, the "Sir Pat".

One last matter I would like to deal with is the Bartica Road Service. On page 232, there is a deficit of \$177,233. I understand that the department has a truck service but there is serious competition from some Correia who operates a service there, and that parts, and men who work there, are being used on that service. This I understand is one of the things responsible for the great deficit which is being incurred. I understand that Correia is like a partner of the transport service.

Mr. M. F. Singh: There is also grave dissatisfaction in respect of the operation of the Berbice River Ferry and the Demerara River Ferry. I merely want to ask the Hon. Minister what proposals the Ministry has for improving these services. I note in the papers that a new system was being tried, perhaps he can enlighten us how successful that system was for the one day, I think, it was in operation. Tell us exactly what is being done particularly with the Berbice Ferry. There is always a bottleneck of vehicles to go over.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: The 1973 figure projected is a net deficit of \$1,893,988. There is only a difference of \$292,000. The fact is, realising the Government is able to bring it down to that amount at the expense of the population, closing down the railway services, we are living with those problems and people are facing grave difficulties in trying to come to Georgetown. The Government on the other hand, has not been able to improve other services which would alleviate this situation. Guyana Transport Services has not been able to provide adequate services for the residents especially on the East Coast and in Berbice. The Government's decision to close down the railway was a bad one.

The M. V. Arakuna which was given as a gift by the Canadian Government, was doing the service on the Waini River between Morawhanna and Quebana. They have not operated it for two years. It was taken in for repairs and up to now it has not been doing the service. The captain, Mr. Atkinson, is today without a job and the Government has not considered giving him compensation for the services he has rendered. Can the Minister indicate why the Arakuna is not back in service and how soon it will be put back to facilities the people in the area?

Mr. Ram Karran: I would like to ask the Hon. Minister why is it that Government fails to protect the passengers using the Blairmont-New Amsterdam service which runs five trips both ways for Government, the charge for which is 15 cents. The remaining number of trips are run by the estates and through it should be published on these trips, the sum of 25 cents is charged for all trips. There is no notice on the vessel, or on the stelling or elsewhere, so that the travelling public will know which trips are Government trips so that they would pay 15 cents. The operator charges 25 cents throughout and thereby deprives the traveling public of the concession that should be theirs having regard to the Government's arrangement which allows them to pay only 15 cents. Perhaps the Hon. Minister will arrange to see that adequate notices are put up both at the stelling and on the boat.

I make the observation having regard to the railway services having been removed, this deficit, \$1,893,899, is excessive because the Government has locked off a large section of the service and there it is the deficit remains high. I wonder if the Hon. Minister will explain that this high deficit is due to the Transport and Harbours Department financing the External Trade Bureau. The Transport and Harbours Department is handling the cement activities of the E.T.B. A large number of sacks remain sodden on the wharf thereby sinking the wharf, and it is my information they have paid no money to the Transport and Harbours Department. These things create a tremendous lot of trouble and the charges on this Head will not be accurate when the auditors go to look at times.

3.20 p.m.

I want to deal now with items on page 115 while I am on my feet, but you may prefer me to deal with them at the appropriate time, sir.

The Chairman: Let us deal with that at the appropriate time. Hon. Minister, I am determined to finish this Head.

Mr. Hoyte: In reply to the Hon. Member Mr. Wilson's point about the construction of sheds, I wish to explain that because of the road improvement works on the approaches to Georgetown it is not considered a reasonable thing to build the sheds. The Hon. Member knows that the road between Buxton and Georgetown will be widened so as to have a four-lane highway and beyond Buxton, as far as Mahaica, the road will be improved and straightened out. Until those works are done the company will not be putting sheds. If they put sheds now, the chances are they will have to break them down again very soon.

The Hon. Member also raised a question on the inspection of launches. This is the responsibility of the Transport and Harbours Department. The law at present requires that launches be inspected annually. What happens between annual inspections nobody can vouch for. The Hon. Member did refer to a tragedy which occurred in the Essequibo River, but my information is that that was a collision. It had nothing to do with the seaworthiness or otherwise of the craft.

The Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh, in substance, wanted to know what was being done to improve the ferry services. In the Capital Estimates of the Ministry this year we are seeking provision of half a million dollars to build a new type ferry for the Demerara River crossing which would relieve the powered pontoon for service in the Berbice River. We believe that with the acquisition of the new barge type ferry and with the pontoon operating in the Berbice River we would be in a better position to offer a more rapid service to people who use the ferries.

The Hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud wanted to know why the Arakuna is not in service any longer. I am not in a position to answer that question because that service was not run by this Ministry. I believe that it was a service provided by the Ministry of Agriculture but I can make enquiries and pass on the information to him.

The Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran raised a question on the Blairmont/New Amsterdam ferry. I think he is under a misapprehension when he says that the owners provide a service for the Government. The service is wholly private but the Transport and Harbours Department fixes

the fees. The fees are 15 cents. I take his point that perhaps there should be notices put up to enable people to know when they are being exploited. I will give instructions to the General Manager of the Transport and Harbours Department to have this done.

Most members referred to the deficit and claim that it has not gone down sufficiently having regard to the phasing out of the East Coast railway. But may I point out that this deficit includes the gratuities which were paid to the people who were retrenched. The total sum is rather substantial, but even without that there is a substantial reduction in the deficit. Obviously it has not gone down as dramatically as one would have expected having regard to the retrenchment simply because the gratuities are there.

Head 36, Ministry of Works and Communications (Communications), Transport and Harbours - \$1,893,998 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

**HEAD 37 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS
(COMMUNICATIONS) CIVIL AVIATION**

Question proposed that the sum of \$754,357 for Head 37, Ministry of Works and Communications (Communications) Civil Aviation, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Feilden Singh: I wish to ask a question on items (10) and (11) on page 113 and on subhead 2 on page 114.

Mr. Ram Karran: Subhead 6 on 114.

Mr. Wilson: Subhead 1, item (10), Telephone Operators.

Mr. Feilden Singh: Item (10), Telephone Operators and item (11), Teleprinter Radio Operator. We note that for the 6 posts, telephone operators, which still appear on the Estimates

there is a token provision of \$1 and against the next head there are 12 new posts for teleprinter radio operators for which a substantial amount of money, that is, \$40,608 is to be voted. I ask a question just for information. Are there any telephone operators at all to be employed under this item which has provision of \$1? It seems to me that telephone operators are employed under item (11), Teleprinter Radio Operator which has a provision of \$40,608. Why are we still maintaining telephone operators with an establishment of 6 and token provision of \$1? Is anyone paid from that vote or are they all under item (11)?

Page 114, subhead 14, Maintenance at Timehri International Airport. I am taking the opportunity to talk about the restaurant. I have received several adverse reports about the operation of the restaurant at Timehri International Airport. There are complaints that the service is lousy, that people have to wait a long time for service and very often the restaurant is closed very early in the evenings; meals are not available during the normal hours and service, in particular, is very slow. There seems to be gross dissatisfaction generally about this service. I wonder whether the Hon. Minister has received any such complaints. Is he aware of any such dissatisfaction? If he is, perhaps, he would tell us what can be done about it.

Would he say who owns the concession and on what terms and conditions this concession was given? Was it given under the condition that if the service is bad, if an area of dissatisfaction is pointed out, the concessionaire would be called upon to remedy the deficiency. If deficiencies are not remedied I presume the Minister will have the power to take the concession away. Perhaps the Minister can tell us what the situation is. I have heard of dissatisfaction. I myself have had to wait for long periods for service. Since there seems to be this dissatisfaction what can be done about it?

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Wilson: Under subhead 6, Maintenance of Interior Airfields, I should like to deal with the question of private operators of aircraft in the Interior. The Government claims that it

would like to develop the Interior, make it easy for Guyanese to get to the remotest corners of the Interior and to develop the hinterland. My information is that these private operators perform a service which the Guyana Airways Corporation is not equipped to perform that is to say we do not have the type of aircraft that can land at certain places. But they do find it necessary at times to land on the Government airfields and they are being prevented. I think the Government should have a policy of encouragement to these pioneers, these people who are performing such a great service to help in the development of the hinterland, rather than obstructing them or discouraging them. Perhaps the Minister will say what is Government's attitude towards these private operators of light aircraft.

Mr. Ram Karran: In addition to what my colleague the Hon. Member said about the operation of private aircraft, what I object to and what I suppose decent Guyanese will object to is the arbitrariness with which this Government operates. The system in the Interior is, if there is a shout or if there is any agricultural development, whatever it is, the people themselves begin, they make an airstrip in most cases with a small operator. If the shout remains a shout for some time then Guyana Airways wishes to crack in. No one has any quarrel. In fact, the more the merrier in so far as these operators are concerned; let them go in, but you cannot go in, spend a few thousand dollars allegedly to maintain the strips which were built by the private people and the private operators and tell all the rest hands off. That sort of thing is too arbitrary.

One would expect that the Government had a policy. Sir, what happened? When the shout dies down Guyana Airways just leaves, closes their doors, and leaves the people at the mercy of the small operators. We had a case the other day where not only the small operators but the settlers in the Interior had to complain. You cannot have it both ways. It is true that you have the monopoly. If it operates in the interest of all with the necessary safeguards no one will have any quarrel even though it is a monopoly. But you cannot give licences to private operators and at the same time take away all these rights that they had before and tell them hands down. It is the arbitrariness which we object to more than anything else.

Mr. Hoyte: Mr. Chairman, I am glad that the Hon. Members Mr. Wilson and Mr. Ram Karran raised this question about private aircraft. It will give me an opportunity to clear up a great deal of positive misrepresentation which appeared in certain sections of the Press on this matter.

In the first place, G.A.C. has no monopoly. The Government does not prevent any private aircraft from operating in this country. Earlier this year the Ministry sought to bring a certain measure of order into the operations in this country by the owners of private aircraft. The situation was threatening to become anarchic. None of the private owners was observing the terms of this licence. The Ministry therefore sought not only to enforce the terms of the licence but to ensure that there was a more orderly operation in this field.

It is significant that all of the noise and confusion came from people who did not own private aircraft, with the exception of one gentleman who had already taken a decision to leave this country to go to St. Lucia where he had inherited property and where he decided he was going to re-establish himself. But the other owners of private aircraft discussed with the Ministry, and the Director of Civil Aviation the various problems as they saw them, and we arrived at an amicable solution. There is a formula worked out which is being applied now. It is true that certain miners came down to Georgetown because they had been misled into thinking that private aircrafts were banned from going into the Interior. This is not true at all.

The Hon. Member Mr. Singh raised a question about the need for a token provision for telephone operators under subhead 1, item (10). With the expansion programme being undertaken currently by the Telecommunications Corporation the whole system will be taken over by that Corporation. They have, on a tentative basis, taken over the staff which formerly came under the Civil Aviation Department. Until this matter is formalized and finalized, we are bound to maintain these posts in the Estimates. But since we expect they will be absorbed finally by the Telecommunications Corporation we have only put a token provision. If

per chance something happens which prevents this matter from being finalised then there is the provision here and the authority to pay staff which is due to them.

The Hon. Member also stated that he had received complaints about the service provided by the concessionaire at the Airport. It is true that some time ago there had been complaints and the Ministry had acted in the matter. Within recent times the Ministry has not had complaints. I do not know whether the Hon. Member is talking about old complaints or he is alleging that there has been a reduction in the quality of service recently. The Ministry does have the power to intervene to require the concessionaire to observe certain standards and provide a certain quality of service. The restaurant is now being managed by Mr. Hubert Chang, a gentleman who is well known in business circles. He has been in business for several years and I have every reason to believe that he is capable of providing the kind of services required. I would ask the Director of Civil Aviation to investigate these complaints to find out whether these complaints are justified. The Ministry has not had complaints in recent times.

Head 37, Ministry of Works and Communication, (Communications) Civil Aviation, \$754,357, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Page 115.

DIVISION XVIII – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Question proposed that the sum of \$4,261,319 for Division XVIII, Ministry of Works and Communications, stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. M.F. Singh: A very short question - -

The Chairman: Just a minute. I wish to announce at this stage that there are one or two minor corrections on this Head in respect of page 115. Amend the legend of subhead 12 to read:

“to provide for the construction of dredging barge and 3 hopper barges.”

On page 126 amend the description of subhead 37 to read “Miscellaneous Works and Services” instead of “Hire of Transport”. On page 127 under subhead 13 insert subhead 14 against the subhead described as Bartica/Potaro Road. These are all circulated already. Please proceed Hon. Member Mr. Singh.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. M.F. Singh: A short question on subhead 3, and if there is the need to question on subheads 12, 13, 16, 19, 21, 22, and 24.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Subheads 1, 7, 19, and 22.

Mr. Bhola Persaud: Subhead 6.

The Chairman: I thought I had explained that there was agreement that only the major spokesmen on both sides of the House will speak on this Head, and one backbencher. The Hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud is the spokesman on this.

Mr. Ram Karran: Sir, I had indicated while we were doing the other Head that I would like to raise a number of questions on Transport and Harbours Department, subheads 4 and 9 on page 115.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh.

Mr. M. F. Singh: Subhead 3, Purchase of Tugs and Barges. We know that the ferry for the Demerara River would be provided under subhead 9, but where will this barge and tug be allocated? Perhaps the Hon. Minister will tell us.

On subhead 7, Construction of and/or reconditioning of ships: we are asking for \$100,000 and the legend states: "To provide for the purchase of three generators and one crane for the M.V. Ambrosia. I seem to recollect that huge sums of money have been spent on the Ambrosia from the time we took over this vessel. Is this the last amount we are going to be asked for? After this, will the Ambrosia be in perfect working condition, barring the unforeseen circumstances of breakdown? Will it be completely rehabilitated, and can we expect efficient service from it? It is a lot of money we have spent.

On subhead 8, Purchase of Equipment, what is this going to be spent on, \$418,950? Miscellaneous equipment. Nearly \$1/2 million. Subhead 12, Dredging Equipment. Maybe the Hon. Minister would like to tell us what are the dredging operations that this vessel will embark upon when it is put into operation. Subhead 13, Purchase of Equipment, no details are given. What equipment will be bought there? Subhead 16, Guyana Surinam Ferry, \$500,000 to provide a ferry. Could we be given some details of this? I presume a feasibility study was done and the Government is satisfied that it will pay its way, or it is proposed to subsidise it. I merely want to know. How often, how many times per week? I must presume that a proper feasibility was done and the Minister will be able to give the details of this.

Subhead 19, Rehabilitation of Timehri Airport. What are these rehabilitation works for the proposed \$250. I understand it is being spent. Subhead 21, Ogle Air Strip. To provide for the purchase of miscellaneous equipment. Like what? Subhead 22, Purchase of Air Craft. I seem to recall that the Civil Aviation Department does own aircraft already. Would the Hon. Minister tell us how many aircraft the Civil Aviation Department owns, and what will this particular aircraft be used for?

Subhead 24, Canadian Aid Programme, \$612,000 in Canadian money. How will this money be spent?

The Chairman: It is Guyana money, not Canadian money.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Specific finance \$400,000 and other finance \$212,000, and the legend states: "To provide for the preparation of sites for beacons, the installation of equipment and other related works. Canadian grant."

Mrs. DaSilva: Under Postal and Communications, I should like to congratulate the Government of Guyana through the Hon. Minister of Information, Culture and Youth, that at last, the ban is being imposed on Christmas cards. I said earlier on, when I was speaking on telephones, that a suggestion from this side of the House is not ever received by the Government, or very rarely. I am pleased to see this is one of the suggestions the Government has taken. Two years ago, I made the suggestion on behalf of the United Force, that Christmas cards should be banned in order to promote the use of Guyanese cards, so I wish to thank the Hon. Minister of Information, Culture and Youth.

I should like to ask the Hon. Minister about the gantries on the Demerara Ferry Services. These gantries were damaged. The erection of the Ferry Stelling is not very many years ago. It seems that people have little regard for Government property and they damage expensive equipment while nothing seems to be done about it. Would the Hon. Minister say how much it cost to put the gantries into working order again and if there is anything to help to try and inculcate in people a sense of responsibility towards other people's equipment?

Subhead 9, I think we are having new ferry vessels, so maybe we can have the typographical error corrected.

3.50 p.m.

Maybe when the Hon. Minister - -

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva I want to finish at 4 p.m.

Mrs. DaSilva: I am just asking the Hon. Minister to be relevant when he replies to questions and to keep out of the realms of things of which he knows nothing so that he causes no embarrassment to other gentlemen in this House.

Mr. Bholu Persaud: Subhead 6, Other Stellings. We have noted that this is "to provide repairs to the Leguan Stelling, extension of the Adventure Stelling and works at the Goods Wharf Yard". While this is very commendable I would just like to ask the Minister whether it is the intention of the Government to provide other repairs for stellings in the Berbice River, in the Canje District and in other areas, Barima Stelling including the old Hog Island Stelling which is now beyond repairs. Will the Minister kindly indicate to this House?

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Subhead 1, Postal Services: the amount of \$44,000 is sought. The amount is so small I do not feel that provision is being made for the building of new post offices. I wish to ask the Hon. Minister if his Ministry has ever considered the question of building a post office in the Ruimveldt area. If so, will the Minister indicate how soon this will be done? The questions which I wished to ask on subheads 7 and 19 have already been asked by the Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh.

Subhead 22, Purchase of Aircraft. I wonder if the Hon. Minister can say how many aircraft at the moment are in service at Guyana Airways Corporation?

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, I will deal with subheads 2, 3, 7 and 9 together. Subhead 2, Purchase of Equipment, subhead 3, Purchase of Tugs and Barges, subhead 7, Construction of and/or reconditioning of ships and subhead 9, New Ferry Vessels, together.

The Chairman: You are keeping in consonance with the appellation given to you of admiral.

Mr. Wilson: There is need for another large vessel such as the "Malali". Earlier the Minister referred to some smaller vessel to assist with the cargo. That will not do at all. You cannot depend on auxiliary vessels alone. You need a major vessel or you have to build a bridge. If you are thinking of having another vessel, as required by the situation, then you should know that \$5,000 cannot build one.

As regards tugs or barges. An expert came here some time ago and recommended tugs and barges especially for long distances like the service to the North West. I would like to suggest to the Minister that he should consider using tugs and barges to transport produce from the North West and to have passengers transported by air service. This will mean having a better airstrip in the North West District to accommodate the type of aircraft that would be used in the service.

Mr. Ram Karran: In the first case I would suggest to the Hon. Minister that the heading, Demerara Ferry Terminals, subhead 4, for \$50,000 is a misnomer. Actually the Demerara Ferry Terminal has been completed. I understand that this amount is for the construction of offices to be the Head Office of the Transport and Harbours Department whose office has been taken over. It was furnished in "style" for the Hon. Minister who is now answering questions but unfortunately it has been taken over by the Hon. Minister, Mr. Hope. This goes to show the way in which the Government spend money. In other respects I would say the Government is completely barren of ideas. If the word "barren" is too strong, then I would say "bereft" of ideas.

Against subhead 7, construction of an/or reconditioning of ships the Hon. Minister tells us that they are going to "provide for the purchase of three generators and one crane for the "M.V. Ambrosia". I quoted statistics from Transport and Harbours Department to show that this vessel in one year had run one hour and they had spent hundreds of dollars on it. Now we are to spend more money. This vessel, as I indicated in this House a few years ago, arrived in Trinidad on December 18. The Hon. Minister will not give us the facts, but my information is that the people in Trinidad refused to have anything to do with the vessel after examining it.

The other point I make is that this vessel was completely re-engined, according to my friend the Hon. ex-Minister of Works and Communications. Now it is found that the vessel needs a new hull. That is my information. Let him correct it! Instead of changing the hull or scrapping the vessel, which I think the members of the Government would do if they had any brains at all, new generators and cranes are going to be put in. For what purpose?

Apart from the "Ambrosia", which is a dead duck, the Hon. Minister should tell us something about the "R.H. Carr" and all the gifts which he got. What do they propose to do with the R.H. Carr? My friend was nursing it along. They told us in the newspaper that they are going to make a barge ferry for cars at New Amsterdam. I now see that the "R.H. Carr" has been completely dropped out from the Estimates.

This Government, as I said, is bereft of idea. The members of the Government do not seem to have proper advisers and that is why they come and waste taxpayers' money. I was making a rough calculation. If they put all the money that they spent on the "Ambrosia" and "R.H. Carr" and the American boat which they collected and on which they spent thousands of dollars to bring it down here, if they put all that money together with the \$20,000 which they are giving to their friends in Trinidad for not one bit of service except solidarity, they would be able to build a vessel to relieve the "Makouria" or the "Mallali" or the Berbice ferry. They have no ideas; they are wasting taxpayers' money which we on this side must seriously object to.

Mr. Hoyte: I shall convey the congratulations of the Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva to the Hon. Minister of Information, Culture and Youth. I would advise the Hon. Member also that one cannot live in a glass house and attempt to throw stones. As far as I understand, there are no ladies in this House. We are all politicians of this House. I am prepared to attack anybody who attacks me. There are no ladies and gentlemen here. This is the period of women's liberation.

May I take the subheads in order. A question was raised on subhead 1, Postal Services. May I assure the Hon. Member who raised the question that we intend next year to establish four

post offices at East La Penitence, Campbellville, Kwakwani and Agricola.

Under subhead 3, Purchase of Tugs and Barges, I should like to assure the Hon. Member Mr. Wilson that again the Government is ahead of him and the very proposal he put for using tugs and barges for transporting cargo is a proposal which Government is implementing by virtue of these provisions.

One Hon. Member – I think it was Mr. Bholu Persaud – wanted to know under subhead 6 whether it is Government's policy and intention to rehabilitate the several stellings and wharfs he referred to. The answer is simple: "Yes".

The Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran works up a great deal of heat under subhead 7 and gave us a great deal of advice. It may be a consolation to him and a matter which will enable him to spend his Christmas more happily if I were to tell him that it is not proposed to expend this sum under subhead 7 because I think that the good ship "Ambrosia" has given of her best. It is perhaps not a matter of wisdom to continue spending of money on her.

4 p.m.

Under subheads 8 and 13, Purchase of Equipment, the Hon. Member Mr. Singh wanted to know what kind of equipment was contemplated. The answer is, the sum is to purchase equipment such as welding machines, drilling and the kind of equipment which is necessary for the work of the Machine Section of the Transport and Harbours Department.

There was a question under subhead 12. The crane barges and the hopper barges which are being acquired are to replace the old dredge "Sir Crawford" which has been with us for as long as anybody can remember. I think Hon. Members would know that it is necessary to dredge the River periodically.

Subhead 16, Guyana Surinam Ferry. I think again Hon. Members will know that under the Protocol with Surinam the Governments of these two countries were pursuing this question of closer communication. There was established a telephonic link and there was an agreement that the Governments jointly would establish a company which could run a ferry between Guyana and Surinam. This provision here is to enable the Guyana Government to meet its obligations under that agreement.

I could assure the Hon. Member that all the various feasibility studies and other preliminaries have been done by both Governments. They are satisfied that this is a variable service and it is one which needs to be established if we are going to strengthen friendly relations.

Subhead 19, Rehabilitation of Timehri Airport. A question was raised about the necessity to do these rehabilitation works at the Timehri Airport. This sum is for the construction of a new control tower. The old tower is thirty years old and is in precarious condition. It has been condemned by our Structural Engineers and it would be necessary for us to proceed very rapidly setting up a tower which is safe.

Subhead 21, Ogle Air Strip. Again Hon. Members will know that the Guyana Airways Corporation is now operating out of the airstrip, so it becomes necessary to install equipment and other devices to ensure the maximum safety. There will be things like radios and other devices to ensure the maximum safety. There will be things like radios and other devices which are necessary for ground to air signaling and things like that.

Subhead 22, Purchase of Aircraft. A question was asked as to the need for an aircraft. At present, the Civil Aviation Department has one single engine Cessna. But that aircraft has become inadequate for the work which that Department has to do now. We have established with the help of the Canadian Government an extensive network of navigational aids which have to be serviced regularly and which have to be fuelled. The Director of Civil Aviation will be using this

aircraft to go to remote areas which are not serviced by regular aircraft to ensure that this aids are working and to carry the necessary servicing to enable them to function properly.

I think a question was raised under subhead 24 about the nature of the Canadian Aid Programme. It is as stated in the legend: "To provide for the preparation of sites for beacons, the installation of equipment and other related works."

Division XVIII, Ministry of Works and Communications, \$4,261,319, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

The Chairman: Hon. Members, when we meet on Wednesday we will complete this Head and proceed with the Head, Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction and thereafter the Head, Ministry of Health.

Assembly resumed.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, as this is the last day before the Christmas holidays I wish on behalf of the Staff of Parliament Office, my family and myself to extend to you and your families Greetings. I hope that during the season of festivity we will remember that the Saviour was born not merely for jollification. Merry Christmas to all of you.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Burnham): Mr. Speaker, will you permit me, on behalf of all the Members of the House though as is the tradition the respective Party Leaders will reciprocate your good wishes, will you permit me to thank you sincerely, sir, for your Christmas wishes and to observe at the same time that Christmas always seems to be a time in this House where the rancor and bitterness of political struggle and competition disappear. It is also a season, Your

Honour, when regardless of our religious persuasions or the absence of religious persuasions all Guyanese enjoy themselves citizens of the country.

It is almost the end of the year and it is only fitting though we shall be meeting again before New Year's Day for me on behalf of my colleagues on this side of the House not only to thank you for your wishes but also to remark on the amount of patience, understanding and tolerance you have displayed during the months past. At the same time also in the tradition, but not merely in tradition, really meaning it and feeling it, I should like to convey the wishes for a Happy Christmas not only to you but to your charming supporting spouse and to the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and members of the staff of Parliament Office.

4.10 p.m.

I sometimes feel, sir, that the most unenviable appointment to get within the cartilage of this building is an appointment as a member of Parliament staff. You have to be pleasant, you have to simulate, which, of course, in certain circumstances is called diplomacy, and you have to work under the most trying conditions. I think it is only right that we express our thanks and our good wishes to them and hope that the happiness of their Christmas would be increased by the fact that for at least four or five days they will have a rest from us.

I would also like to take this opportunity on behalf of my colleagues to wish a very happy and merry Christmas to the members of the press who have reported us from time to time. There have been occasions on which they misreported us, but we in the good Christmas spirit have blamed that not on malice but on human frailty, especially in the context of the cross talk that goes on, and it is quite possible that sometimes they pick up remarks from one side which were really made by the other side. As a good Christian, I remember being taught: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us," especially in this case of when the trespassing was not deliberate but *per incuriam*.

Happy Christmas, Mr. Speaker, to you and yours, to your staff, and also to my good friends of the press, whose very presence is proof of the high democracy we still enjoy in Guyana. *[Applause]*

Mr. M. F. Singh: On behalf of the United Force, may I extend a wish for a very happy Christmas to yourself, to your good spouse, the Hon. Members of this House, the staff of Parliament, particularly the reporters, both official reporters and members of the press, who I am sure have had, on occasions a very trying time trying to follow the course of the deliberations in this House. I sympathise with them. Sometimes I sympathise with myself having to sit here, but at this time of the year, we must allow the spirit of goodwill to prevail, remembering as we do, the birth of Our Saviour.

As the Hon. Prime Minister has said, despite differences in political persuasions, in religious beliefs, and otherwise, this is the time of the year when we indeed wish the very best to each and every one of the our fellow human beings. A very merry Christmas, again, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cheeks: Mr. Speaker, I know that I can remain silent and that you and the various Members of Parliament on both sides of the House will assume that I wish to join them in accepting the good wishes which you have tendered to this House. I do indeed do so, but Christmas is a time for giving, and for loving, and for well wishing, and therefore I wish on my own behalf, I do not know if the Independence on my left intend to join with me in doing so, to offer to you, sir, and also to your dear spouse the best wishes for a merry Christmas.

I presume that I may have the opportunity to wish you also a very happy New Year in the face of the very difficult circumstances which you are going through in that Chair. I wish you well.

Mr. Ram Karran: In keeping with tradition, I would wish to join with those Hon. Members who have greeted you and other members of the staff, including Members of the House, wishing them a pleasant Christmas and so on. I do wish to join most sincerely in these wishes particularly to you for the patience and the tolerance you have exercised while you sat in this Chair during the last year. But we are living in changing times when we must not only stick to tradition.

I recall particularly the words of the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Development and Agriculture, when he said that the Government necessarily had to see that reasonable prices were paid to the producers of certain commodities because the producers must necessarily live. I am very glad for that change. It is a departure from the past and I hope that this tradition that has been created by the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister will prevail throughout Guyana.

In that spirit, I wish to go beyond the bounds of this House not only to restrict our good wishes to Your Honour and to your family, to the staff, to the press, but to extend them to the people who sweat in the fields and all Guyana. The wish that I would like to make is that in the coming year, the Government and those who are in power will see that the good life is extended not only to us who live, in the words of my friend, in the corridors of power and the corridors of influence, but throughout Guyana and throughout this land of ours. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, Hon. Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh, Hon. Member Mr. Cheeks, I wish to thank you on behalf of the staff of Parliament and my colleagues for your kind settlements. I also wish to invite all Members of the House, the staff of Parliament Office, and members of the fourth estate to join in having a drink with me. May I also say that only local refreshments and food will be served.

22.12.72

National Assembly

4.10 - 4.20 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, "That this Assembly do now adjourn until Wednesday, 27th December, 1972, at 2 p.m. [*The Minister without Portfolio and Leader of the House*]

Adjourned accordingly at 4.20 p.m.
