

**THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 5]

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

20th Sitting

2.00 p.m.

Monday, 9th August, 1971

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

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

Members of the Government

People's National Congress

Elected Ministers

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

Dr. the Hon. P.A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture

(Absent – on leave)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appointed Ministers

The Hon. S.S. Ramphal, S.C.,
Attorney-General and Minister of State

The Hon. H Green,
Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply

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

(Absent)

Parliamentary Secretaries

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

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

Mr. W. Haynes
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister

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

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

Mr. C.E. Wrights, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply

Other Members

Mr. J.N. Aaron
Miss M.M. Ackman, Government Whip
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. Jordon
Mr. S.M. Saffee
Mr. R.C. Van Sluytman
Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.
Mrs. L.E. Willems

(Absent – on leave)

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.M. Hamid, J.P. Opposition Whip
Mr. G.H. Lall
Mr. M.Y. Ally
Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P.
Mr. E.M. Stoby, J.P.
Mr. R. Ally
Mr. E.L. Ambrose
Mrs. L.M. Branco
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mr. Bholu Persaud

(Absent – on leave)

(Absent – on leave)

(Absent)

Mr. I.R. Remington, J.P.
Mrs. R.P. Sahoye
Mr. V. Teekah

(Absent – on leave)

United Force

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

(Absent – on leave)

Independent

Mr. R.E. Cheeks

OFFICERS

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

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

The National Assembly met at 2 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair.]

Prayers

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, leave has been granted to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture for today's sitting and to the hon. Member Mrs. Da Silva also for today's sitting.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following papers were laid:

- (i) Report of the Guyana Rice Marketing Board for the period 1st October 1968 to 30th September, 1969. [**The Minister of Trade** (Leader of the House) on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture.]
- (ii) Report for the National Insurance Board for the years 1969 and 1970. [**The Minister of Labour and Social Security**]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read a first time:

The Livestock (Loans for Development) Bill, 1971

PUBLIC BUSINESS**BILLS – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS****PUBLIC CORPORATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Public Corporations Ordinance, 1962, for the purpose of establishing the Guyana State Corporation and for other purposes connected therewith.” [**The Prime Minister**]

The Prime Minister (Mr. Burnham): Mr. Speaker, in 1962 there was enacted the Public Corporations Ordinance, Ordinance No. 23 of that year, which made provision for the setting up of various public corporations wholly owned and controlled by the Government.

Prior to the enactment of that Ordinance, there was at least one other type of public corporation, the public corporation which owed its identity and being to its own peculiar statute. There are at least two of these corporations which spring to mind immediately, the Rice Marketing Board and the British Guiana Credit Corporation.

Subsequent to the 1962 enactment, a number of public corporations were set up like the Guyana Marketing Corporation, the Guyana Airways Corporation, the Guyana Telecommunications Corporation. These were all by Order under the Public Corporations Ordinance of 1962.

More recently, since Government has been entering into fields which were previously exclusively under the aegis of private enterprise, we have seen a number of corporate bodies like GUYBAU, owned by Government 100 per cent, or Guyana Gajraj, owned by the Government to the extent of two-thirds.

We have also seen other corporate bodies established, like the Livestock Development Company, the Guyana Transport Services, the Daily Chronicle Company Limited, all of which are corporate bodies. In some cases they are owned absolutely by Government and in other cases Government has a majority share-holding, particularly in the case of the Daily Chronicle and the Guyana Transport Services.

It may be recalled that on the 14th December last year, when I was winding up the Budget Debate, I announced that Government proposed at that time to establish a Ministry of Public Corporations. That was done on 1st January, 1971 and I advised the President to charge the Prime Minister with the responsibilities for that new Ministry.

On the 14th December, after referring to Government's entry into the fields of printing, shrimping and transport, I observed as follows:

“Government finally recognises that going into these various fields and undertakings will require certain re-organisation of certain sections of the Public Service. There will be required a re-organisation of the structure of the Public Corporations which now operate under their own Ordinances and Acts or under the Public Corporation Ordinance, 1962. That is being looked at and reviewed.

Indeed, there is necessary a certain co-ordination of all these various corporations in which Government has either the whole stake or the majority. They need streamlining in so far as the services they provide are concerned, their methods of operation, their staffing and their staff remuneration.

One of the things this Government proposes, in keeping with its thrust into the business field or industrial field, call it what you will, is the setting up of a Ministry of Public Corporations or giving to one Ministry, either as a sole responsibility or as one of its responsibilities, the responsibility for Public Corporations.”

Then, in April of this year, speaking at the Annual Congress of the People's National Congress I said – and I quote from page 38 of a book “To Own Guyana”:

“The Public Corporations also are not sufficiently responsive to the objectives of the times. I have set up a new Ministry – that of Public Corporations. Its first task is, with the aid of experts, to advise on legislation aimed at streamlining those undertakings, except Bauxite, in which Government has total or majority holdings. They have to be reorganised to achieve efficiently and accountability. There has to be a recognisable rationale and system and these businesses, for businesses they are, have got to be co-ordinated internally and as between each other.

In addition there will be instituted a holding corporation which will hold Government's equity on behalf of Government in all of the other corporations. This will be the major

co-ordinating agency and overall policy planner, which I propose to immunise for politics or political patronage. A great deal of cleaning up and redirection is necessary and it shall be done. As the public sector expands we have got to ensure its efficiency and financial success at all costs. We cannot throw the people's money and resources to the winds."

2.20 p.m.

It was against this background that the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Corporations went into consultation with a number of persons, experts in their own fields, and presented a memorandum which was accepted by the Government. On the basis of this memorandum drafting instructions were given to the drafting section of the Attorney General's Chambers and out of those instructions has come this Bill which seeks to amend the Public Corporation Ordinance No. 23 of 1962, a number of other Ordinances, and also to establish a holding corporation, the Guyana State Corporation, which corporation will not only hold Government's equity in these various corporate bodies – and I have already referred to the three categories – but will also be responsible for their control and the co-ordination of their functions.

Perhaps at clause 2C sub clause (1) paragraph (a) subparagraph (i) of the Public Corporations Ordinance, as amended by this Bill, the particular supervisory functions are more carefully and explicitly stated.

That a certain co-ordination between all of these corporate bodies is necessary I do not think can be denied. In 1962, under section 34 of Ordinance No 23 of that year, provision was made for the creation of corporations under that ordinance. In various subsequent clauses provision was made for the appointment of boards.

When one looks at the schematic arrangements in the substantive Ordinance and also at the constitution of boards since way back in 1962, one recognises that basically these boards were not expert boards or professional boards. They were boards consisting of persons who

might have been deemed to have had a great deal of worldly knowledge but, calling a spade a spade, an objective observer would never be quite of the abilities which these members of boards were supposed to have. Of course, I may also include the tailor who was once chairman of the Guyana Electricity Corporation subsequently chairman of some New Guyana Printery until he ran afoul of the real socialist-capitalist owner. *De mortuis nihil nisi bonum*. I should not be saying these things about the incapacitated and politically dead.

It was quite clear that these boards were hardly in the position to exercise real and firm supervisory powers. They were part-time boards and this is no reflection necessarily on the persons who were the members of the boards.

Apart from that, when one looked at the management of the various corporations, one found a disparateness of criteria for remuneration, for instance, of the same category of employee or officer. One found a diversity of systems. One tended also to find that too frequently corporations were not necessarily interested, or did not seem to be interested, in earning a surplus at the end of the year. It is my contention that unless there is a good policy decision to the contrary any corporate body that is carrying on business should aim at a surplus.

The basic difference between the privately-owned corporation and a publicly-owned corporation I understand to be that though they both seek surpluses the privately-owned corporation would seek to dispose of surplus to its private shareholders in the form of dividends for personal use and/or consumption and/or deployment.

In the case of a publicly-owned corporation, the surpluses would and ought to be used for the nation's benefit in one sector or another, and consequently to my mind, Mr. Speaker, unless it is a definitive aspect of Government's Policy that a particular service is established merely to bring a service to the community and that it is realised also from the beginning that it cannot be profit-earning, it is the duty, I contend, of those public corporations to work effectively and efficiently so as to ensure the surplus for use in the nation's interest.

These were some of the considerations which led to the decision that there should be proposed to this House the establishment of the Guyana State Corporation. When one looks at the Bill which is before us, one will note especially after going through the schedule to the Bill, that in most cases where, before, policy decisions were subject to directions by a Minister or the Cabinet, that, if this Bill is passed those directions, the control, the supervision, the co-ordination all fall within the hands of the State Corporation.

The State Corporation as set out in clause 2, which is to be clause 2 (A) of the Public Corporations Ordinance, will consist of a President, a Vice-president, appointed by the Prime

2.30 p.m.

Minister and Chief Executive Officers of all public corporations established under section 34 of the Public Corporations Ordinance, and other persons designated by the President representing other corporate bodies which were not instituted or did not come into being under section 34 of the Public Corporations Ordinance.

In addition, there will be a maximum of five other persons appointed by the Prime Minister. These would be obviously persons apart from the Vice-president, the Chief Executive Officers, by whatever name called, on the various public corporations, the representatives of corporate bodies in which Government has the majority holding or absolute holding. And this will be the governing body of the Corporation. It is to be noted that there will be a Secretary to the Guyana State Corporation, who will be the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Corporations.

Put another way, he will rank as a Permanent Secretary. That is provided for in what should be clause 2B.

Then we see at what should be clause 2C the main functions of the Guyana State Corporation and its main powers. I may note *en passant* that the Minister may reduce the number of public corporations under section 34, that come within the terms of reference of Guystac but he may also increase the number from time to time. So far as the decreasing of the number if concerned, the order will have to be the subject matter of an affirmative Resolution. Then there are a number of provisions, which I would describe as housekeeping provisions, as to the right to borrow, the right to charge fees, obviously to the subsidiaries, the right to invest, all of which rights, to my mind, are matters of detail which we can consider when we come, I would suggest, to the Committee stage.

I should like to attract this House's attention to the proposed clause 2L which provides that the Guyana State Corporation shall not later than six months after the end of each calendar year submit to the Minister a report containing certain matters, and that report should be printed and with the auditor's report be laid before the National Assembly. It is proposed that this particular provision, if adopted by this House, should be firmly insisted on and, of course, it can be readily assumed and accurately so, that if the holding parent corporation has to submit its

2.40 p.m.

report within six months of the end of the year covered by that report, that it will see to it in the exercise of its supervisory functions that its subsidiaries, so to speak, do the same.

Under the provisions of this Bill, it is also proposed, Mr. Speaker, to vest all of the assets by Government in all of these corporations and corporate bodies in the Guyana State Corporation.

It would be accurate to say that this Bill represents a clear attempt to have the public corporations run by persons with the necessary background, training and experience and furthermore to place responsibility unequivocally.

It is to be noted, for instance, that the Vice President, who for practical purposes is the operative head of GUYSTAC, will be chosen from amongst persons appearing to the Prime Minister “to be qualified as having had experience of, and shown capacity in matters relating to agriculture, industry, trade, commerce, banking, finance, science, education, social welfare or administration.”

It is to be noted that he will be *ex officio* Chairman of all subsidiary Boards, but the Deputy Chairmen will be the chief executive officers.

When one looks at the number of corporations and the arrangement of the legislation one recognises that for day-to-day purposes the Presidency of GUYSTAC is not executive. The President of GUYSTAC is not going to be present at GUYSTAC meetings and therefore the real head of GUYSTAC will be the Vice President.

Secondly, looking at the subsidiaries, one recognises that unless the Vice President were able to enlarge time and also be capable of a great deal with physical elasticity he cannot be present at the various board meetings of the subsidiary corporations. Consequently, the operative head of each one of these corporations will be the chief executive officer, by whatever name called. Sometimes he is called Executive Chairman, sometimes General Manager. In one case, under the N.I.S. legislation, he is called Director. He is going to be the operative head, the chief executive officer, and he is also going to be Vice Chairman of his corporation’s Board, which vice-chairmanship amounts, in normal practice, to the chairmanship.

The significance of that, I would say, is this: A General Manager cannot say, “You have had a number of laymen, some sleeping, some tailors, talking about electricity.” He cannot say that he would have done this or he would have done that had it not been for this lay Board which had been imposed on him, or which had been seated on his shoulders. He is the chief executive, and he is also Chairman of the Board for practical purposes, being second in command, so far as

chairmanship is concerned, only to the Vice President of GUYSTAC who, for practical purposes, would very rarely be present.

An interesting thing about the constitution of the Board of the subsidiary corporation is not merely that its virtual chairman is going to be the chief executive officer; it is not merely that the other members of the Board will be drawn from his own corporation and will be departmental heads, so to speak. It is not even merely that the non-members of the corporation, who can be members of the Board itself, will be limited to three in number, but that there is proposed a new member for each one of these Boards, elected by the workers under rules to be laid down by the Ministry of Labour. [Mr. Ram Karran: "Overseas vote."] That will not be absolutely necessary in the circumstances, but if the necessity arises we will use the legislative power to enact such legislation.

I am assured by the Minister of Labour that before these rules for the election of workers' representatives to the Boards are promulgated by him he will be in consultation with the T.U.C. and other representative registered trade unions.

I may observe that when one looks at the Schedule one sees a plethora of amendments, amendments not only to the Public Corporations Ordinance, but also to the Guyana Credit Corporation Ordinance and also to the Rice Marketing Ordinance. Those are the three that catch my eye. There may be others what we will discover as we get into Committee.

I should like to attract the attention of the House to the Schedule which sets out the corporations that will immediately come under the control and supervision of GUYSTAC. They are listed in Part 1, which makes it easier to identify them. They appear at the bottom of page 14 of the Bill. They are:

Guyana Credit Corporation

Guyana Electricity Corporation

Guyana Rice Marketing Board
National Insurance Board.

In Part II are listed those corporate bodies which were not, as in the case of those under Part I, instituted under their own bits of legislation or statute and which also were not instituted under section 34 of the Public Corporations Ordinance. They represent companies:

Guyana Gajraj, Limited
Livestock Development Company, Limited
Daily Chronicle Company Limited
Guyana Transport Services, Limited

May I say, Mr. Speaker, that it is envisaged that certainly Part II will be added to from time to time, and maybe also Part I. May I say, also, sir, that since this bit of legislation for practical purposes, that is, the purpose of supervision and control will not really come into operation until the 1st of October, that is, the exercise of the supervisory functions in respect of corporations, I would accept that the Minister will have an opportunity to add to the list ofcorporations under the Public Corporations Ordinance.

As I see it, Mr. Speaker, this should hardly be a politically controversial measure. It may be controversial in so far as certain technical aspects are concerned. I cannot see how any but the naive could deny the need for an institution which could co-ordinate, supervise, and control these various corporations in which Government's funds and property are involved. I find it difficult to believe that there is anyone who would prefer to have political Ministers making the policy decisions and giving the directions instead of a holding corporation. [*Interruption*] I cannot see anyone objecting to or being in disagreement with the general concept of removing superfluous members from the Boards of the various Corporations. I should like to say that what is really

proposed is to streamline these corporations, make them consistent as between themselves, make them consistent as between themselves and the public service as we know it. One knows of the anomalies. I remember in one case I was speaking to a secretary of a corporation, I asked him, "Does your messenger at your corporation get more than a messenger in the public service?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Does he have more duties than the latter?" He said, "No." I said, "Why does he get more?" He said, "Because it is a corporation." Mr. Speaker, it will give us therefore an opportunity to have the public sector internally consistent. I am not suggesting necessarily and let me hasten to say this. That every post which you seek to fill in the corporation or in Guystac will have its exact counterpart in the public service. But at least when you have a holding supervisory corporation the criteria will be general as between the public corporations, and these criteria will be sensible. Because for as matters stand out now one very often fails to recognise the rationale behind some of the alleged criteria. I thought this Bill was not going to be politically controversial but I am assured *sotto voce* by the Acting Leader of the Opposition that it is going to be. Therefore, I had better hasten to commend its Second Reading to the House so that we can have the contributions of the Opposition which I am sure will be valuable and which I hope will be in the spirit of the prayer which is read every time this House meets.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall.

Mr. Lall: Your Honour, the whole concept of this Bill seems very wrong. This Bill is designed in no uncertain terms to create a one man dictatorship in Guyana. As far as public corporations in this country are concerned many of them are run under the jurisdiction of the several Ministers.

Right now, what we are seeing in this Bill is a provision to create a supreme power within the framework of the Government machinery so as to have a say as to who shall be appointed and who shall not be appointed. I am in sympathy with all the Ministers of the Government

because if I were in their shoes I would have behaved in the same way. It is surprising to know that a Bill of this nature is presented to this honourable House giving one single man – the Sampson – all the power in this world. All these educated Ministers sat in the council of Ministers and allowed the hon. Prime Minister to bulldoze the Bill and bring it before this House. It is obvious that the Prime Minister is, by this Bill, usurping the powers of the different Ministers who control the different corporations.

I know that head rolling is the order of the day. I know every few months one Minister's head is put in the guillotine so as to remind the others that "if you do not adhere to my call, you might be next." The behaviour of the cream of the society in Guyana reflects how the ordinary people will behave. I would have thought that all the Ministers in the Cabinet would have rejected this dictatorial Bill which gives powers to one single individual.

If you were to turn page after page, Your Honour, you will see that the President of Guystac, who obviously will be the hon. Prime Minister, will also have the powers to select the Vice President. Not the Cabinet, Your Honour. We are not talking about Government any more. We are talking about a one-man Government. I agree that self preservation is the first law of nature. Throw principle behind your back! Either accept it or face the fate of the hon. Member Mr. Robert Jordan!

As I have said before, the whole concept of the Bill is wrong. The Bill should be burnt here and now. What of the workers' participation we are having in these public corporations? What will be the nature of the workers' participation in the various corporations? The Bill indicates quite clearly that there is need for people with experience, people with capacity in agriculture, industry, trade, commerce, banking, finance, science, education, social welfare and administration. Now, Your Honour, let us take agriculture first.

With the limited financial resources which the man at the bottom has – I am not talking about technical education or the paper tigers – with his practical knowledge and technical know-

how in agriculture, if this man were appointed to boards, together with Government's technical officers, it is obvious that the corporations will be run most effectively. There is need for people with the honesty of purpose to serve.

What is wrong in the whole concept of the corporation is that there are square pegs in round holes. What the Government should do is try to right the wrongs, put the right people, no matter if they are small men, into positions. A little baby would cry if you gave it sour milk. You give them a sour piece of legislation to make the Prime Minister a dictator of this country. All the big men in the Cabinet sat down and imbibed this obnoxious Bill that was presented to them. What a shame and disgrace! I admire the Prime Minister for his ability to rule men because he always holds the sword over their heads and he knows how to wield it.

It is disgraceful to bring the National Insurance Board under the ambit of Guystac. The institution that runs the department of social security must come immediately under the jurisdiction of the Minister who is charged with social security. There is no need to have a higher body to control it. This is an attempt to build the administrative machinery and bureaucracy and we cannot afford this kind of bureaucracy in our administration at present because our country is underdeveloped.

The N.I.S., it is said, is a profitable institution. With your permission, sir, I should like to say that many amendments are needed in the laws relating to National Insurance. I am speaking on the Bill but I am diverting a little.

The Prime Minister should have seen to it that the Minister of Labour and Social Security made the necessary amendments in the N.I.S. before bringing this Bill. As I have said, it is not practicable for the N.I.S. to come under the jurisdiction of a corporate body. It should be a separate entity run by the Minister of the Government who is charged for social security.

The N.I.S. purchased Government securities to the tune of \$9 million yet it has been in operation for only part of 1969 and 1970. According to the Statistical Bureau, the life expectancy of a male in Guyana is 59 years and the life expectancy of a female is 63 years. If pensions are to be given to people at the age of 65, whom are you going to give pensions to? To dead men? We are therefore asking for the pensionable age to be reduced to 55 years. [**The Prime Minister:** “Under the Public Corporations (Amendment) Bill?”] I am saying that the Government should right these wrongs and the N.I.S. should fall under a Minister. Control should not lie with a Minister, then with the Prime Minister and then with the President. The whole concept is wrong. We are now going towards the first stage of a one-man dictatorship like Papa Doc’s. This is the second Papa Doc in the Caribbean.

We think that many of the provisions in the N.I.S. law need amendment and the Prime Minister should have an overall look but he should not interfere in the running of the N.I.S. As the No. 1 citizen of our country he should see that the pensionable age is reduced to 55 years and that the wives of men who contribute to N.I.S. should automatically be entitled to maternity benefit.

These are measures the Government should bring forward in the interest of the working people of Guyana, instead of wanting to control the N.I.S. The scheme was in operation for three months in 1969 and for 12 months in 1970 and it has over \$9 million in hand. Protect the workers of this country instead of bringing such a disgraceful Bill before this House to usurp all the powers given to the Minister!

Mr. Eusi Kwayana who was head of the Guyana Marketing Corporation is no longer capable of running the corporation. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh, Blessed be the name of the Lord. The hon. Member Mr. Robert Jordan is no longer capable of running the Transport Services.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall, I had drawn the attention of the hon. Deputy Leader of the Opposition that I will not permit any scathing remarks made in respect of any person or persons out of this House or any Member of this House. Will you also please refrain from doing this?

Mr. Lall: Thank you for reminding me, sir. But I am not making any remarks against any person.

Mr. Speaker: I have ruled that you have said that the man is incapable of running the corporation and that is scathing.

Mr. Lall: Sir, I am asking a question. Am I not privileged as a Member of this House to ask a question of the Prime Minister whether these people whom he appointed as chairmen of Boards whether they are not capable any more of running these Boards? The Bill calls for asking of questions, Your Honour. *[Laughter]*

What about my hon. Friend Mr. Neville Bissember? Is he not capable anymore to be Chairman of the Telecommunications Corporation? Your Honour, I pity these chairmen. I want to advise the Prime Minister that ten brains are better than one. If you put ten brains together it will help you to make better decisions. Do not try to abolish democracy in our country by doing it in your Cabinet. We are, therefore, asking that instead of the hon. Prime Minister seeking power to run all these corporation machinery by himself, he should try – *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Harry Lall please proceed.

Mr. Lall: It is our duty to expose. We still have time to retain the parliamentary system in our country. Let us maintain parliamentary democracy in our country. Let us give various Ministers the power conferred upon them by the portfolio they hold; let them share the

responsibility of the Government and let us make sure that we have a democratically run Government in Guyana.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. E.M.G. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the burden of the Prime Minister's argument for bringing forward this measure as far as I understand it is the need for the co-ordination of the activities – the functioning of the various corporations. We do not disagree that there should be co-ordination but our position is that it is not necessary to create this stupendous machinery for such a purpose. We feel that co-ordination should be exercised by general guidelines promulgated by the Cabinet and they should be passed down to the various Ministers responsible for the respective Corporations. We feel that would make for greater elasticity and the special adaptation to the peculiar circumstances of the various corporations.

The result of this Bill when it becomes law will be a great lot of overlapping. The Guyana State Corporation will be exercising functions which ought to be exercised by the respective corporations and overlapping certainly would lead to confusion; responsibilities will not be properly placed. The hon. Prime Minister is introducing the Bill said that the managers or the executive officers of the respective Corporations, as they are going to be effective chairmen they could not fall back under the excuse to say that, well they have been saddled with too many laymen and that is why they are not being successful.

Our argument is that overlapping will cause confusion; it will also lead to a lack of a sense of responsibility somewhere. The people in Guystac, when it suits them, will say they are not responsible for anything that goes wrong, you are responsible; we are only satellites to carry out directions. Any situation which breeds this lack of responsibility must lead to chaos and inefficiency and ultimately to great loss to the nation.

My colleague, the hon. Member Mr. Lall, referred to the fact that this will make the Prime Minister a great dictator. I should like to stress this will make the corporations mere satellites, and as satellites they cannot be effective, they will not be able to function efficiently and effectively. This Bill gives the appearance that somebody is going to be a superman, either the President or his vice president, that he can supervise personally what is happening all around. If this is not so, why bring forward such a measure which gives him such a position. Is he only going to be a sinecure, having a position in which he will not exercise any functions?

In fact, the Prime Minister actually said so when he said that it will not be humanly possible – I am not quoting his exact words – for him or his chief executive officer to be physically present and to be chairmen at the various boards. So why give him this post if he cannot carry it out? This is indeed a waste of time and it smacks of some degree of deception in that the Guyanese people are made to believe that there is this Prime Minister, or the vice president, responsible for this and therefore it is all right. We know the Prime Minister is competent, and as far as I understand, his vice president has some competence. Let us grant them all of this, but is it humanly possible for these individuals to supervise and direct what is taking place in all these corporations? The Prime Minister has agreed it is not possible, the why this ponderous machinery to create these positions?

The hon. Prime Minister spoke about reducing the number of laymen. One would have thought that in the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, rather than de-emphasising the part the small man would play, more emphasis would have been given to the opportunity for training which would be available to laymen serving these boards. The greater the number of laymen serving these boards, the greater the opportunity for training and the greater the opportunity to take their responsibilities to the country. This should help the Co-operative Republic to move forward. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, this argument by the Prime Minister is tantamount to his reneging on the policy of the Government of making the small man a real man. This is removing the small man from where he can acquire training and, indeed, make himself a real man subsequently.

I am sure that if a sincere approach should be taken to this point I am making, there will be some Amendment forthcoming, whereby the composition of the corporations will be such as to increase the number of laymen who will serve on these corporations. Laymen ought not to be treated in a disparaging manner as is indicated in this Bill.

The hon. Prime Minister is talking about co-ordination, but it is being confused with uniformity. What appears from this Bill is that it is the intention of the Government to have uniformity in all its corporations. This will be disastrous as anyone can tell. The various corporations have different factors; they have to serve under the various circumstances, and there should be some elasticity whereby the corporations could adapt themselves to suit the peculiar circumstances and factors of the kind of service that they are catering for. This cast iron form assigned for all corporations is saying that there is need for unanimity. We agree that there is need for co-ordination and this can be done without this machinery; without Guystac; there should be general guidelines as to how the corporations should function and the people should be left to function to suit the kind of service that each corporation has to cater for.

I recall that the Guyana Association of Local Authorities at one stage had advocated a two-tier system of local government but the Government went ahead and brought about a one-tier system. Already, we are seeing the result of this. I notice that Mr. Cecil Hinds, formerly chairman of Newtown, has resigned, and the report is that he is dissatisfied with what the City Council is doing for Newtown. If there were a two-tier system, the subsidiary council, say of Newtown, would have been able to look after the peculiar problems of Newtown much better than this big City Council, this impersonal city council, which has no particular interest in any particular area.

In the same way, if there is not this Guyana State Corporation to direct, supervise and dictate to the various corporations, each of the corporations would function more effectively, more efficiently, to meet its peculiar circumstances and service.

We do urge the Government to reconsider this measure, not to go ahead with this kind of cast iron uniformity that it seems to be bent on bringing about, but to have a measure which would allow more flexibility and therefore more efficiency with respect to the various services that the corporations will give.

In amplification of what I have said, I should like very briefly to refer to one or two corporations. I shall speak with particular reference to the Guyana Transport Services and the Guyana Telecommunications Corporation. I have noticed recently that the Minister of Communications is very often by-passed when there are matters that he should speak on.

My friend, the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall, said that the Ministers are like babies. Well, I have always felt sorry for the Minister of Communications, Mr. Kasim. When it is a matter dealing with buses, the Minister of Finance speaks. Even when something is said with special reference to the functioning of the buses, it is the Minister of Finance who replies. The hon. Minister, Mr. Kasim, is not given an opportunity to speak, but still he comes to the Assembly and either the Deputy Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance speaks for him.

This shows that for some time now responsibility has been taken away from Ministers, not only from the Minister of Communications. This has been the trend and this is now the climax of that trend. It is no wonder that the Telecommunications Corporation is not giving the satisfaction which it ought to give.

In 1967 we heard that in two years time the service was going to be fully expanded. The year 1969 came and nothing happened. In 1970 we heard that expansion was round the corner, that the equipment was in hand; 1971 has come. I do not know how many periods of two years we will have to wait before we get the expanded telephone service and an end to the bottleneck in the application for telephones. There is a sales section in the Telecommunications Corporation. To sell what? There are to telephones available.

As regards the Guyana Transport Services, we recently passed a Motion to guarantee a loan for the purchase of 19 additional buses. We would hope that when these buses arrive there will be a more efficient service, that there will be more bus sheds and that consideration will be given to the public, and that this giant state corporation will not restrict the functioning of the Guyana Transport Services Limited.

To sum up, our position is that we agree that there is need for co-ordination, but that this measure is too ponderous. It is like taking a hammer to kill a flea. It is not necessary. Some general directions and guidelines could not be given to meet all of this. That would make for a sense of responsibility on the part of the respective corporations. Responsibility will bring about efficiency.

We also think that we have three persons on the Board – I take it they will be unofficial members – together with one who will be a worker, is not adequate. There ought to be an opportunity for more laymen to serve on these various corporations in order to give them an opportunity for more training and to bring about what the Government speaks about, the making of the small man into real men.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: Mr. Speaker, when the Government nationalised the Demerara Bauxite Company Limited the Opposition happily supported nationalisation. We said that the Government was moving in the right direction. It was our view then, as it is now, that the time should come in this country when the workers should not only participate in companies or corporations established by the Government but that, in fact, we should move to the position where we should have workers' control of these bodies.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, is evidence of the Government's determined policy to exclude the workers from making a tangible contribution, and playing an effective role in the administration of those bodies in which they are employed. If the Government claims to be socialise as the Government has been saying all the time then the proper direction for the Government to move in his to get the workers directly involved in the management and administration of these bodies. The world is not without, probably, persons who believe that they are supermen. Because examining the Bill and examining the qualifications for a person to be chosen for a certain position both in the Guyana State Corporation and even the so-called subsidiary bodies one wonders if this country at this stage can find such persons to fill these various positions. In my view, the Government will not be able to live up to the letter of these provisions in the Act that we are called upon to pass today.

I am somewhat disappointed that the labour organisations in this country did not speak against what I consider to be a Bill not in the interest of the workers of this country. We say, take away DEMBA. Let us move to control the commanding heights of the economy; let us move to control, to take command of our natural resources so that people of this country themselves can be involved and so that we can earn, retain and can benefit from the profitable areas of this country. While we make all of these statements we still see that the Government has not come back before Parliament to pass a measure which, in fact, will keep the workers outside of the administration. The workers will be no better so far as this Bill is concerned than they were under administrations that were expatriate.

Mr. Speaker, like the hon. Member Mr. Wilson we are not opposed to co-ordination. We are not opposed to Government moving to streamline the various bodies that are under Government's control. The Government can count on our support. Because so far as public corporations are concerned in this country they have a history of mismanagement, squandermania, incompetence, discriminations and frauds. Very often we read in newspapers of how frauds are committed in this corporation and that corporation and still when we await and look out for the prosecution against those who have committed the fraud we find a blanket of

silence and no action taken. In the Electricity Corporation we know what the Government has to do and we know in so many other Corporations the Government has to remove its own boys who have let it down. Therefore, the Government cannot deny that in many of the Corporations there are great weaknesses. But why does this weakness exist in these Corporations? It is because in almost every Corporation the Government has removed those persons who did not share the political belief or who did not support the P.N.C. Government. I do not want to name the persons who have been removed from the various Corporations. If the Government was allowing greater participation of a wider section of people in these public institutions, these corporations would have been on a better footing today. I feel that in view of the Government's recent utterances and changes it is recognising that these weaknesses that have been existing are still existing in these corporations.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the Bill one finds that the Minister of Public Corporations will have sweeping and tremendous powers. This point has been made before. The Prime Minister will do very well to read back his speeches when the P.P.P. Government introduced that very Public Corporations Ordinance No. 23 of 1962. If he reads his speech he will see the contribution he had made during the course of the debate on that Bill. This Bill has in fact made one Minister a virtual dictator whereas the 1962 Ordinance had allowed greater participation.

It is felt that public accounts and public finance should be protected and be open to the best of scrutiny and examination. It is because of this strong belief that the Opposition tabled the Motion asking that the Director of Audit be empowered to audit the accounts of all public corporations. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, this view was expressed by a former Director of Audit, Mr. Dunlop. But still one finds in this Bill before the House on page 7:

“The Guyana State Corporation shall keep accounts of their transactions to the satisfaction of the Minister and such accounts shall be audited annually by an auditor appointed by the Minister.”

The Opposition is compelled and forced because of our experience to oppose this provision very strongly. We cannot support a satiation whereby the public will not be given the best opportunity to be satisfied that the finances of this country are properly expended. I do not point finger, Mr. Speaker, but as a Member of Parliament I am compelled to look at these weaknesses and make proposals to the Government with a view that it can endeavour to appreciate what we are saying. The Government is determined to pass the Bill as printed. I feel that this particular provision should go and should be amended to allow the Director of Audit who under article 116 of the Constitution has the authority to audit without any act or interference and who must not be subjected to any political influence or pressure. These are elementary points for the good administration of any Government and to my mind it is wholly wrong to ask a Minister to appoint the auditor to audit the corporations which come directly under his jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Persaud, this may be a convenient time for us to take the Suspension.

Sitting suspended at 4 p.m.

On resumption --

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud.

Mr. R.D Persaud: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, persons who are directly involved in activities that have relation to the various corporations, according to this Bill, are likely to be excluded from the administration, for instance, the vice president of the State Corporation will be chairman of every subsidiary corporation, the general manager of the State Corporation will be vice chairman and such number of heads of departments of the corporation as may be designated for the purpose by the general manager of the Corporation with the approval of the Guyana State Corporation, a representative other than a person who is a member of a corporation by virtue of paragraph (c) selected by persons employed by the corporation from among themselves.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no doubt that the person who will chair and the deputy must of necessity follow very closely government yardsticks in appointing and promoting persons and be persons who are members or loyal supporters of the Government. In the second place, heads of departments of many of these corporations are persons who are employed because of their political affiliations. What are we left with? We are left with the situation where the employees of these corporations will have the right to elect one person to the corporation and, of course, the machinery for the election of that one person, who will be the workers' representative, will be geared by the Minister of Labour. I am not going to bother with the machinery as such, but looking at the composition one must see clearly that the workers as such are not going to even have meaningful participation in these corporations, while the Opposition advocates control by the workers as distinct from participation.

We read in the *Guyana Graphic* of 1st August: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." This statement was attributed to a former chairman of the Guyana Marketing Corporation, Mr. Eusi Kwayana. He said he had entered the Corporation at the request of the Government and he was leaving the Corporation at the request of the Government. It is this situation that we are concerned with. We do not want a Government where there is lord, who gives and takes at his whims and fancies. We need a government – and we must advocate for the creation of such a government, even if we fall – which is democratic. We must have a government which will allow the people to contribute because of their special skill and experience, because of their expertise and their knowledge. They must not be selected, elected, or removed at the whims and fancies of the Government, the Prime Minister, or any Minister of the Government.

What I am seeking to advocate will be of interest to many Ministers whose heads are listed to be rolled shortly, so I will hear them play a different tune, very shortly too. We want a government and a country where all the people can play their meaningful roles. At the Guyana Marketing Corporation, there is a lot of confusion as to payments and so on. In one of the newspapers it was recently stated that a spokesman for the Guyana Marketing Corporation had

explained that it would not be correct to say that the Corporation owed oil companies some \$300,000 for oil supplied. Mr. Speaker, this was in reply to rumours that the Corporation owes factories, that are producing oil, and the Corporation only pays them small sums resulting in a situation where there is a shortage of oil.

Here again, it is because of the lack of vision on the part of the Government that we find ourselves in a situation where there is a serious shortage of oil. As a result, people suffer to get good oil and even if they make an attempt to purchase oil, they are compelled to pay black-market prices.

Then we have got the Rice Marketing Board. This body is named in the Bill. What would be the position of the farmers of this country so far is the Rice Marketing Board and the Rice Development Corporation are concerned? Not very long ago, representatives were named for the Rice Development Corporation. One can see that with the passage of the Act, those persons within a short span of time on the board will no longer be able to give their knowledge and expertise to that institution in which they have direct interest.

The Rice Marketing Board is also in a similar position. The Government is advocating co-operativism. "We want more co-operatives, we want the people to be involved. We want them to participate", but in fact, by the actions of the Government, persons who can participate and contribute in a meaningful way, are denied that opportunity. I agree with the merger of both the Rice Marketing Board and the Rice Development Corporation, but they should no longer be institutions where the farmers are not going to be in control of their administration.

4.40 p.m.

The Rice Marketing Board should now be converted into a co-operative if the Government is to carry out its own philosophy of a Co-operative Republic. Rice farmers, who are producing rice for our local markets and for export, should form the co-operative and they should be in the

administration. They should administer the rice industry completely and go to the extent of handling their own marketing of rice.

When the Bill is examined one must be able to look at all the implications and one must be able at this moment to see how many areas of our country will be affected by the passage of this Bill. I do not want, on this occasion, to point to all the figures as far as poor administration of the R.M.B. is concerned. The farmers were excluded from the Board and you will see the losses suffered both by the R.M.B. and the R.D.C. When these bodies lose money, the rice producers are the people who suffer.

We must be able to protect them; we must be their advocates in Parliament. Whenever there is a debate on any measure in this House we must see where they will be affected and we must see how we can persuade the Government, if we have the strength and capacity to do so, to make laws whereby those people will be given a fair chance. In this Bill we see that the rice farmers of this country will be affected.

I should like to call upon the hon. Prime Minister to state clearly in this House what will be the position of the Rice Marketing Board and the Rice Development Corporation. Will the Rice Producers Association be allowed full participation? As I said earlier – and I want to reiterate it – the Government should now move to convert the rice institutions into co-operatives so that these institutions can be controlled directly by the rice farmers.

The Guyana School of Agriculture Corporation is also involved in this piece of legislation. I think the Guyana School of Agriculture should now be administered and managed by the Board of the University of Guyana. I am not for one moment saying that I am in support of the present constitution of the Board of the University because we have serious and grave reservations about the Board and about the family unit that is being built up on the University Board.

The Guyana School of Agriculture has an important role to play in this country. Basically Guyana is an agricultural country and we have pointed out in Parliament before the inadequacies of the School and the necessity for the expansion of various types of facilities. We see the necessity for the establishment of a Faculty of Agriculture where Guyanese can be trained and qualified right in Guyana as agriculturalists.

The Opposition therefore advocates on this occasion that the Guyana School of Agriculture, instead of coming under the Guyana State Corporation, should be managed by the University of Guyana and the areas for expansion, the areas for development and changes in the Guyana School of Agriculture can best be managed and handled by the University of Guyana.

In conclusion, I wish to say that we cannot lend our support to the measure because of some of the reservations we have, because of some of the provisions of the Bill and because we feel strongly that the Bill really hits at the root of democracy. It makes provision for dictatorship and, worse of all, for the removal of persons who should be involved in the various corporations in this country. Those who will be seriously affected, I repeat, are the rice farmers.

The Government must therefore examine this Bill with a view to correcting its many weaknesses so that the people of this county can work in unison for a better Guyana and so that everyone will enjoy happiness.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud.

Mr. Balchand Persaud: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister in his address to the House this afternoon, when he introduced the Public Corporations (Amendment) Bill, outlined some of the main reasons that motivated the Government into introducing this Bill.

The Prime Minister listed the reasons as follow: For the main purpose of co-ordination; streamlining of the methods of operations; staffing of the corporations and staff remuneration.

One can ask: What really motivated the Government into introducing such a Bill? Surely the facts we have heard indicated that the Government is having serious difficulties in ensuring that these corporations run at a profit and that they really serve the interests of the nation.

In 1962, when some of the corporations were created it was felt that the Government would have been in a position where it could have solved some of the problems of the people by helping them and by running the corporations profitably. We have been able to see that most of the corporations are not really run in such a way as to make us very happy about them. No doubt this is the reason why the Government has decided to introduce this measure.

Our argument is that the Government could have achieved the same results by other methods. If the Government is having problems, in terms of co-ordination, I do not see that this is a bit problem. Each corporation may need a different type of policy. In other words, different policies should govern different corporations.

Let us take the Rice Marketing Board. Surely, it has functions that are different from the functions of the Guyana Electricity Corporation, the Guyana Telecommunication Corporation or the Guyana Marketing Corporation. Those who are in charge of the administration of these different bodies will have different interests in terms of running their respective corporations. The question of co-ordination, therefore, only comes in at a certain level, that is, at the level of policy and not at the level of the administration of corporations.

The Guyana Marketing Corporation, for example, may have vehicles, but surely the vehicles of this corporation will not be used to do the work of the Guyana Telecommunication Corporation. Surely the specialists who are involved in the work of the Guyana Marketing Corporation or the Guyana Telecommunication Corporation will not be engaged in the same type of activity as the specialists at the Rice Marketing Board. The question of co-ordination does not really come in, in such a way, that the Government will be able to save the country some

additional expenditure. In other words, co-ordination comes in when the Government is thinking in terms of saving the taxpayers' money, but we do not see this coming about.

The Prime Minister said that the whole idea was to have co-ordination.

4.50 p.m.

This is not a very serious argument on the part of the Government to say that co-ordination is going to help to make these corporations run in a more efficient and proper manner.

The Prime Minister said it is to streamline the methods of operations. It is clear that each of these corporations has its own functions. To streamline each corporation does not necessarily entail the co-ordination of other corporations in relation to that corporation. A corporation needs streamlining when it faces certain basic problems: the problem of staffing, the problem of administration to bring about the best results. We have not been able to see this being done.

The question of staffing. Each corporation no doubt would have its own staff appointed to carry out the functions of the corporation and there is no relation with other corporations. Because you cannot have an accountant doing the work of a technician at the Guyana Telecommunication Corporation and the same person doing the work of the Guyana Marketing Corporation. You have different persons doing different functions and therefore while the functions maybe the same in terms of say accounting, the fact is they will function in their own specific corporation.

The question of staff remuneration: This, no doubt, is a problem because civil servants in the country are saying that persons employed at the various corporations are enjoying better salaries and facilities. Perhaps this is very true. In fact, even the Prime Minister himself had said on a certain occasion that the persons employed at the various corporations are enjoying better salaries than civil servants. If this is the problem, all Government has to do is to bring forward to

this House the necessary legislation which can be able to regularise the salaries which is creating the big controversy in the country today. They do not need this big apparatus; this is additional bureaucracy which is creating so much hardship on the taxpayers of this country. You cannot really curb expenditure when you want to create a bigger body by paying people fantastic salaries. The Government should have found other avenues where it could have been able to get the same results that it wants to have now. You have a big body at the top and the smaller one at the bottom. The same expenses for the running of each corporation and now you are creating another bureaucracy at the top to have control. This is not good enough at all.

The Prime Minister said that for persons to be appointed to these boards we do not need people with political patronage, that is, persons should be non-political who must serve on these boards. We know for a fact that at the last general election over 95 per cent of the people in our country voted. They supported either the P.P.P. or the P.N.C. Those who joined the United Force no doubt also have P.P.P. and P.N.C. cards. But the fact is every person has a political mind because of the many people participating in the last general elections. It is difficult to find people who are not affiliated to a political party.

The Prime Minister said in the course of the debate on the nationalisation of the Demerara Bauxite Company that the Opposition will be represented on the various boards, corporations and commissions, etc. The only Board is the Rice Marketing Board, the only Corporation is the Guyana Rice Corporation where the Opposition is being represented by the rice farmers of the country through the Rice Producers Association. Other than that the Government is not honouring the statements that it is making that it is going to allow the Opposition in the various boards. We find difficulty in trying to understand what the clear policy of the Government is. We do not say that the Government should not want to control because the Government may want to control these boards and want to appoint people whether they are political or not. But in any case, all the persons who are appointed at some stage or the other have a political mind. It is clear; the Government cannot say that they will find neutral persons.

One expects that the Government would be able to make such appointments that can be able to serve in these corporations to make them payable concerns. But we are not in a position to see the Government doing this.

I do not see how it is that these bodies can have so much autonomy that the chairmen can inflate their own salaries to such exorbitant sums. Let us take the Guyana Electricity Corporation. The G.E.C. has certain key persons in the corporation, Mr. Moriah, Mr. Bily Carto, etc. we have been able to see from information that Mr. Moriah has been able to, although he started out with a salary of \$600 per month, to inflate his salary to the extent of \$1,600 per month. As a result of the Prime Minister's intervention, he realised that he would have been kicked out, so he left the job. Then there is the other gentleman, Billy Carto, who has been able to increase his salary to a very high amount also within a very short period of time, and having five secretaries, and he has been able to get a loan from the Guyana Electricity Corporation to build a house. When he realised that he would have been sacked, he started to set up a restaurant called the Black Pussycat. The Prime Minister although realising this man in being for what he is, has given this man diplomatic status to be an officer for one of our Embassies in a foreignland. Mr. Speaker, this is the type of thing that is happening. On the one hand, the Prime Minister is saying, "If I have the power and if I am able to control the Corporations then all the rascality that is being carried on at the bottom I might be able to control it and tighten it." Here is a clear case where the Prime Minister saw where the man has arbitrarily got a loan from the Corporation to build a house, has been able to use the Corporation's facilities at his personal disposal on numerous occasions, yet for all the Prime Minister sits very quietly and accepts what the man is doing and still gives him a bigger position. This is not very good at all. This man, as far as I understand, maybe because elections are near, has been sent to be a registration officer. But whatever he is, sir, the question of proper screening of personnel, which is one of the most burning problems confronting the corporations, is vital. The Government has not been properly screening the personnel employed at these corporations as a result you have so many problems.

The Government has not been employing conscientious persons, but only persons who have PNC cards, presumably, and feel nobody can Push authority on them because they have cards, that they have licence to do whatever they wish. I quote from the English Annual Report and Statement of Accounts of the Guyana Electricity Corporation for the year ending 31st December, 1968:

“Accidents & Absenteeism:

- (a) Industrial injuries accounted for a loss of 2,783 man-hours, and absenteeism, which continued to occur at a high rate, lost the Corporation 55,617 man-hours;”

Actually 6,952 man-days of work lost in a year. Something is seriously wrong because it is clear that what is happening in this corporation is that nobody has authority to discipline anybody. If the people who are supposed to be in charge of the workers engage themselves in such corruption, one does not expect a worker at the bottom to be able to stick to any discipline.

This is the basic problem as far as I see and the hon. Prime Minister is going to get more wrong with the people when he has control at this top level, because he will be in direct confrontation with the people. All is not well with this corporation and I do not see how this new corporation would be able to have such control over the finances of the various corporations.

The Director of Audit in the 1966 Report said that the then Guyana Electricity Corporation came in with a net profit of \$134,625 for 1966 as against a net profit of \$69,525 for 1965. The debentures have not as yet been paid off. The auditor said that he has not seen the accounts for 1964, 1965 and 1966 of the Guyana Marketing Corporation, or the accounts of the Guyana Airways Corporation for the same years.

I should like the hon. Prime Minister to tell us how it is by having this State Corporation he is going to be able to control and to ensure that the accounts are presented to the auditors to be audited every single year at the correct time. Imagine money being invested from the public

purse in a corporation which is serving the community, and we are not in a position to receive the Reports, the Director of Audit not having seen the accounts! Maybe, all these things have motivated the Government to introduce such a Bill, but these things could have been achieved by other methods than by creating another bureaucracy. But the Government is not very serious.

The Weekend Post and Sunday Argosy of 4th May, 1969 states:

The auditors of the Guyana Telecommunications Corporation had this to say in their report on the accounts of the Corporation for the ten-month period ended 31st December, 1967. I quote:

“Our overall view is that the accounts department greatly needs strengthening. There should be at least a very experienced accountant not necessarily qualified to assist the Chief Accountant in the daily routine. The clerks should be encouraged to take the qualifying examinations of the Institute of Bookkeepers or the London Chamber of Commerce. While there is nothing wrong with young people, it is our opinion that there is not a strong enough body of more mature men who have bookkeeping experience and a sense of responsibility. This should be remedied quickly. In the first ten months of operation, this corporation achieved a net loss of \$187,251. The Berbice public may be interested to know that the equipment for the much-publicised new automatic telephone exchange in New Amsterdam was in 1967 installed at the Georgetown exchange in Brickdam.”

The fact is, a new idea comes up with the Government, the papers take it up, a big balloon is blown in the air, and that is the end of the story. In 1962, when the Prime Minister was in the opposition, at the time of debating the Appropriation Bill and the takeover of the Guyana Electricity Corporation, this is what he had to say in relation to electricity rates. The Prime Minister was showing to the Guyanese nation, that he was champion of the working class and he was representing the working class by asking for reduced rates of electricity. Column 1769 of the Hansard of 17th April, 1962 states:

“I think the consumers of electricity had good reason to hope that, with the advent of this Socialist Government and the preferment to office of the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Hubbard), they would have been relieved of this charge. I do not understand these fancy arguments, when it is merely a simple answer to a simple question.”

Then the hon. Prime Minister went on to say:

“We are interested in finding out why we have to pay more for electricity, and why we should not be paying less for this service. We are not interested in all of these academics here and there – those are above my head.”

He said much more:

“But the Premier said that the industrial rates here are lower. He omitted to say whether the domestic rates are lower. I am not talking about industrial rates, let me repeat. He is under some difficulty in following my point. I can see from the puckering of his brow. He says that the industrial rates here are lower than in other places. That, I doubt, but he does not say that the domestic rates are lower than in other places. So, even if the fuel charge can be considered part of the rates, even if – which I do not accept – the industrial rates are lower than in other parts of the world, why is it that the domestic rate had to be kept at the high point at which it was when the Government took over?”

It was the desire then of the PNC to reduce the cost of electricity rates so that consumers would pay much less. I do not know if the Government has vacillated from this position. I hope that the Government has the same desire to give people electricity at such rates that people would gladly have electricity in their homes, but the rate of expansion in Government's electricity programme is very slow.

The hon. Minister of Finance in the Budget Speech of 1969 was talking about the Tiboku Project. This is recorded in our history where the Minister of Finance mentioned this project. Since, at the time of the inception of the Government in 1969 its members said they intended to carry out this project because it would provide cheap electricity for domestic consumers as well as industrialists, one expects that the Government would be serious, but in the 1970 Budget Speech, all we see at page 37 is a very small bit of paragraph:

9.8.71

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

5.00 p.m. – 5.10 p.m.

“Work is continuing on the development of hydro-power to provide cheap power for final processing of some of our crude products.”

Nothing more is said about it. It has completely gone out of the Budget Speech this year and this is what the people from the Guyana Electricity Corporation had to say. Future Development Programmes in Chapter 4:

“The compiling of a long term development plan for G.E.C is complicated by the present lack of a firm decision by Government as to whether or not the proposed Tiboku hydro-electric scheme will materialise.”

I can well remember that the Government said that feasibility studies on the project were going on.

5.10 p.m.

We have had reports which were made after feasibility studies were done but nothing much has come out of this project. As a result, persons in certain areas of the country, for example, from No. 19 Village on the Corentyne Coast right up to Crabwood Creek, have to get electricity either from small generating plants or by having piecemeal electricity from owners of plants.

The Government must be able to say how it intends to tackle this problem. If the Tiboku project does not materialize, I hope that the Government is thinking in terms of some other alternative. I cannot understand how the Government can make a big noise about a project and after a time you do not hear anything more about it. Is this not similar to Global Agri?

If you were to examine the 1963 Report on the Guyana Electricity Corporation, you would find some very revealing facts. It appears from the 1968 report that the Government has not made up its mind. Why did the Minister of Finance say in the debate that this project was to be implemented? Surely it is clear that the Government was only fooling the Guyanese nation.

In Chapter IV of the same 1968 Report of the Guyana Electricity Corporation it is stated in the section dealing with Corentyne:

“Government has asked G.E.C. to make provision for the electrification of the Corentyne area, and the Corporation has studied the problems involved. A revised scheme has been produced by Management to commence operation in 1971.”

Operations were to commence in 1971 but the corporation has done nothing to show the Guyanese nation that it is going to start this project this year.

Not only that. People living on the East Bank of the Berbice River are suffering because of the lack of electricity. On the East Coast, from High Dam to De Hoop and going up to Perseverance, there is no electricity. The Government must be able to help the families of these depressed areas so that they can benefit from the Government's electrification programme.

Very little is being done. In 1962, it was the desire of the P.N.C., led by Mr. Burnham, to have cheap electricity for the people of this country but we have not seen this materialise. Unless the boards of the corporations are properly constituted and reflect people who have the interest of the nation at heart, who will work together to bring about the best results, there will be no improvement.

The way things are going, I do not see how this Public Corporations (Amendment) Bill is going to ensure the smooth functioning of the various corporations. The Government would have been able to achieve the best results if it had been firm in its employment policies and if, at the inception, it had not been influenced by or succumbed to, whatever political arrangements there are in these corporations. I hope that the Government will see to it that they function properly so that the best results can be obtained for the Guyanese nation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Sutton.

Mr. Sutton: We in this section of the Opposition have always made the point that we are not interested in opposition for the sake of opposition. Though it has been said that the duty of the Opposition is to oppose, expose and depose, we think that in a country such as ours those catchphrases sound very nice. They may be effective in highly developed countries, but it is most essential that the role of the Opposition in a country like ours should be one which endeavours to see that the Government develops, or propounds, as sound a policy as possible. The Opposition should keep behind the Government to see that the measures it proposes do, in fact, redound to the benefit of the people.

We have for a long time been criticising the operation of the Government corporations. I myself have always been very critical of the Guyana Marketing Corporation and all the other corporations which have lost so much money over the years.

In the Prime Minister's presentation of this Bill he laboured the point that the time has come when Government must make every effort to see that the corporations, instead of being areas in which money is wasted, are controlled and developed in order to ensure that surpluses arise for the benefit of the country as a whole.

This is obviously a most laudable intention. In view of the unsatisfactory manner in which corporations have functioned in the past, we in this section of the Opposition are prepared to take the view that the Government is trying to take meaningful steps in order to change this state of affairs.

When we examine the situation closely we think we would be lacking in our duty if we did not take care to point out the areas in which Government does not appear to be taking every opportunity to correct the imbalance, the wrongs, the imperfections, the incompetence and mismanagement that have been the order of the day in these corporations for a long time.

All of us in this House will clearly remember when the question of the nationalisation of the Demerara Bauxite Company was debated. The Prime Minister gave the undertaking that to make this a success a new era must be ushered in and the right people would have to be appointed in the right places. He said that appointments would not be solely controlled by political patronage or political opportunity and that all steps would be taken to see that the necessary expertise was present, either because of qualifications or experience, when appointments were made to boards and when managerial appointments were made.

We made a point at that time to the effect that though we did not agree with the principle involved yet, because it was properly carried by a majority of this House, we would do everything in our power, if given the opportunity, to see that this exercise became successful because Guyana cannot afford the failure of such an important sector in its economy.

5.20 p.m.

Similarly, we are prepared to believe and accept that the Government at long last is trying its best to do what it can as it sees it, in order to get these corporations functioning in a business-like manner, in order to provide surpluses rather than losses.

I would also take the opportunity of reminding the hon. Prime minister of his statements at the time when the nationalisation of the Bauxite Company took place in that every opportunity will be taken in order to involve the Opposition in these exercises, that the Opposition if they could produce the necessary talent would be given an opportunity to get representation on boards and committee. It was hoped in such a manner to mobilise the total resources of the country, not only the material resources, but the human resources in order to ensure that we all were pulling in the same direction in the interest of Guyana. Therefore, we in this section of the Opposition hope that the Government will at this time seize the wonderful opportunity which it now has in creating the Guyana State Corporation in order to work out a system where though the Government, as the Government will take every step to retain proper control, will work out a

system whereby possibly the Opposition parties are invited to put up minority panels from which appointments to these boards can be made. If this is done the question of saying that appointments are made purely on the basis of political patronage would be far more difficult to justify.

Let us examine the question of how the corporations now function. Let us examine the question of how they are controlled. Let us examine what control the Government exercises in the appointment of the officers who control these corporations. We have all read about the resignation of the ex-Chairman of the Guyana Marketing Corporation. Mr. Kwayana made it public to say, "I was requested to serve by the Government and I was requested to cease serving by the Government." Therefore, I can see no issue being taken about saying that the Government is creating a one man dictatorship in this context, because if the Corporations are controlled by Ministers now or Ministers' Departments this bill which states that the power to appoint etc. will be in the hands of the Minister who is given the responsibility and in the absence of such a Minister that Minister will be the Prime Minister.

That is no difference to what is taking place now and we can see nothing more fearful in that clause than is in fact the actual position. Who is exercising control now?

We recognise that an honest effort is being made in order to improve the situation. We have heard criticisms of all that cannot work and all that will not happen but we have not heard a single suggestion of how the various areas of incompetence - the fraud, the mismanagement - how actually they could be improved upon. The fact that these people who control these Corporations are now appointed by specific Ministers under the various Departments of their personal control is just obviously an arrangement of convenience. Because the members of the P.P.P. themselves should know that the Prime Minister before he finds a solution to a problem, more often than not this matter is discussed in Cabinet and there must be some instrument through which this decision is conveyed and whether it is conveyed through the Prime Minister

or a Minister of a specific Department the fact remains that the control is solely vested in the Government of the day.

But, Mr. Speaker, what this Government can do and has a wonderful opportunity of doing is to set out to involve the community as a whole in this exercise of the efficiency of the corporations. It can take the opportunity without losing its control in involving the Opposition parties by asking them to put up minority panels from which persons can be selected in order for the Opposition not be able to say that they have been completely ignored, notwithstanding the fact that there are many people who are qualified to be on these Boards but they cannot get there because they happen to be supporters of the Opposition. The Government retaining majority control in its own hands would be the surest means of having these people from the Opposition panels perform properly because they will always have the right to dismiss them from the Boards in absence of their functioning properly. But then the opportunity will have been taken to involve all sections of the community and all sections of political thought in this exercise to improve the efficiency of the Corporations and make the criticisms of political patronage less pungent. It can be so handled that the tooth could be pulled out of it because any Government in power must have things run according to the right as it sees it as if it can evolve a system of asking them to be completely involved and give the Opposition parties an opportunity to be involved, the Opposition which will then have the opportunity to provide more meaningful criticism and the Government, if necessary, can so tailor its course in order to get the best value from all the brains in this country.

Therefore, we, in this section of the Opposition, feel that the Government is making an effort by the creation of a holding corporation in order to ensure that all the corporations are kept on their toes because that will be the sole duty of the holding corporation.

Let us examine for the purpose of answering the criticism about one man cannot have all the expertise necessary to provide for the Rice Marketing Board for the Electricity Corporation and for what you will. We are pleased to see, Sir, that the composition of GUYSTAC's Board is

made up from the managers or chairmen or deputy chairmen of the specific corporations themselves. Let us take rice. One would presume that the Government will make every effort to appoint a manager of the Rice Corporation who is knowledgeable and has the necessary expertise and experience in order to perform satisfactorily in such a post. Similarly, with the Electricity Corporation, similarly with the Guyana Marketing Corporation, they will have recognised the impossibility just appointing dyed in wool civil servants who have never had any specific training in these particular fields.

5.30 p.m.

The Government has made a giant step by engaging Mr. Thompson, who is a well-known commercially-trained operative, to head its corporation. It is hoped that Government will accept Mr. Thompson's advice in appointing other people who, in conjunction with his colleagues, would be able to try to put these corporations on properly viable lines. The question of appointment purely by political persuasion, I hope, will be buried for a long time. We know that if there is an expert who happens to be a PNC supporter, and a person with experience who happens to be a PPP supporter, what the Government will do. The Government, being PNC, will, provided the expertise is there, appoint its own man.

What the Government will do, I hope, in order to satisfy that everything that could be done is being done, is to ask for the nomination of panels from which minority appointees will be made, and the Opposition will have the opportunity of saying that everything that could be done, its members are involved in this exercise, has been done in order to get these corporations to function properly.

A parallel was drawn in relation to these corporations and private enterprise. The other section of the Opposition takes the view that it does not see how appointing a holding corporation could tend to go far in improving the situation. I am sure it must be realised that the various big business operations in the world, and even in some socialist countries, are all

controlled by one controlling organisation, which has representation on the other boards in such a manner as to see those boards carry out their functions, they will be able to place mismanagement at an early stage and change the members of the board when it becomes necessary.

The controlling board of Guystac will be made up of the controllers of the various corporations. If these people are appointed on a political basis, with very little attention to qualification either by experience or actual qualification, obviously, the attempt will not only fail but the position will worsen. We see no reason to feel that the Government will want to create a situation which will put it in a worse position than it is now, and as far as we are concerned, we hope that this is a conscientious attempt by the Government to improve the situation, as the Prime Minister said, to have these corporations run on business lines, to appoint people who are qualified by experience or actual qualification and not necessarily because their politics are this or that.

As I said, I heard the criticism that the board will be exercising the functions of a Minister in appointing the staff of his corporation. As the Prime Minister in presenting this Bill made clear, the President will be primarily interested in broad policy, but the day to day actions of the board and the carrying out of these policies will be largely in the hands of the board and spearheaded through the Vice-President, who will be the chief executive officer, and on whom the responsibilities will rest for carrying them out.

This is, indeed, a huge assignment. If what the Prime Minister says should actually take place, because of the fact that the person who will be the chief executive officer has been trained along business administrative lines, there must be an improvement, except his efforts are nullified by political patronage, which I cannot see such a man being able to tolerate. He will either carry on and do his best, get the right people appointed in the right places, and if he cannot do that, he will tell the Government he will not be used as a front for its political patronage. I

have no doubt as to the character of the gentleman in question and I hope his association with the corporations will put an end to the losses which they suffer.

Mr. M.Y. Ally: Mr. Speaker, we are here this evening to discuss this Public Corporations (Amendment) Bill. The explanatory memorandum states that the Bill seeks to make provision for the establishment of the Guyana State Corporation by way of Amendment of the Public Corporations Ordinance, 1962. Mr. Speaker, we have seen from example that the policy of the PNC Government is not firm. The policy is what we must term a kind of flip-flop, one day it is one way, the next day it is twisted.

Let us compare the policy of the People's Progressive Party with this policy and we will see that when it was time for this country to become Independent, regardless of the party which was in the Government, the People's Progressive Party gave full support so that our country should become Independent.

5.40 p.m.

When it was a question of nationalising the bauxite industry, regardless of which party was in power, the People's Progressive Party always thought fit that Guyanese should benefit first. This is the policy any Government should try to emulate if it wants to be a proper Government. When to look at race, colour, creed and position and bring these things into consideration, we sometimes go astray.

With your permission, sir, I should like to quote from the speech by Mr. Burnham, who was the representative for Ruimveldt, in the Legislative Assembly. I quote from column 3538 in the *Hansard* of 10th October, 1962.

“Perhaps the Premier may explain a few things in his reply. Of course, speaking for our party, I will say that coming events cast their shadows. The hon. Member for Work-en-Rust has pointed out that this blanket authority is unsatisfactory and seeks to give arbitrary powers to the Government which we have good reason to believe the latter will misuse. Another weakness, from our point of view, is that responsibility, so far as the Ministries are concerned, is not clear. The Council of Ministers is going to be the authority for the establishment of public corporations, but when it comes to the appointment of the members of a corporation we see that a Minister is to be responsible. One has no idea of which Minister will be responsible and, as I understand it, legislation should be precise and accurate.”

I should also like to quote the third paragraph in column 3539:

“But those corporations are going to be entire creatures of the Government – entire Government bodies – and the People who serve on them are going to be hand-picked. We have had our experiences with corporations like the Electricity Corporation, the Credit Corporation, the Rice Marketing Board and the Public Service Commission, and we have seen that in these cases political appointments have been the order of the day rather than appointments on the basis of quality, experience and ability. In fact, I have read such a criticism of the Rice Development Corporation.”

With your permission, sir, I should like to quote further from the eighth line of the third paragraph in column 3540:

“The essential thing about a public corporation is that it is independent of the Government and of political influence. It has its totem of reference and the doctrine of *ultra vires* is sufficient to keep it in check. What is really happening is that the Council of Ministers will be a sort of glorified holding company of directors – directors of a holding company or association of housewives – and will be giving directions here and there from time to time to these public corporations the directorates of which consist of their cronies.”

There is one further point I should like to make and I again quote from Mr. Burnham’s speech, column 3541 of the Hansard of 10th October, 1962:

“(2) You give the Council of Ministers absolute power as to the appointment on all of the boards of these bodies. In other words, though it may well be a public corporation that affects a particular economic or geographical group, that economic or geographical group has no right to voice its opinion regarding a corporation that will affect its interest. (3) A

vague Minister, somewhere about, can exercise a tremendous amount of power. (4) You are giving an executive arm of the Government an absolute discretion of exemption with respect to any of these corporations from any of the provisions of this Ordinance, which provisions may be some of the few provisions that seek to keep a certain amount of control over the executive. (5) The Ministers, contrary to what we have ever seen, heard or intended – I cannot remember whether it has been seen or heard – will be permitted to interfere in these matters.

Sometime ago it was alleged that the Ministers were interfering in certain matters, and the members of the Opposition complained about it. Now the Ministers are making it legal for them to interfere and put their fingers into the pie from time to time.”

As I said before, a Government should be firm. We should be able to direct our attention to the point towards which we are moving. In 1970, exactly a year ago, Government agreed to purchase 51 per cent of the shares in a commercial enterprise which now goes by the name of Guyana Gajraj. The present cost of living is high with food shortages, drug shortages, shortages of hardware and other commodities and we thought that Government had made the right move, not only to regulate but to control and distribute essential goods imported. We considered that the regulation of imports was essential and in commerce the trump card, so to speak, is the question of supply and demand. But what do we find now? This Government is content to sit back as a capitalist, to suck 10 per cent commission from the merchants and further to allow them to play with the economy of our nation. While they fiddle over the control prices there are absolutely no goods to sell.

9.8.71

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

5.40 p.m. – 5.50 p.m.

I should like to put some advice into the Ministers heads because at times they are so bombastic and think that the little power they have in the field of commerce will last forever.

Supply and demand can either make or mar any corporation or business organisation. Guyana Gajraj could have been a valuable asset in assisting the working class people of Guyana. In fact, it could have made the small man a real man. How? By continuing to import the essential foodstuff which the firm had been importing. Also, the firm could have continued to import provisions and with Government aid and assistance it could have imported ample supplies of foodstuff, at the best prices, to suit the pockets of all Guyanese workers.

But, today, however, we find severe shortages of milk, butter, cheese, potatoes, onions, fish and tomato paste. Ask any housewife if she has obtained tomato paste for the past six months. This is the position and the Government remains unconcerned. Drugs, also, are in short supply in the country.

This was an institution which the Government could have profitably used to channel all imports into the country, but we can clearly see that the policy was not to help the poor man but to squeeze the working class people.

What do we find the Government doing today? It is using this firm as a medium to import Daimler cars and luxury items for the bourgeoisie and elite classes – items such as vacuum cleaners, gas stoves, refrigerators, electric mixers, washers and fans – while the poor man is experiencing great difficulty in obtaining essential food for himself and his family.

5.50 p.m.

In all Socialist countries the cost of living is the first importance with any Government especially with regard to food. But this is not so in Guyana. I advise this Government to revert its policies and use Guyana Gajraj to be the main channel for importing foodstuffs.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Ally, I do not see the relevance of your argument in the debate. I think you have been going on for at least five or six minutes. Please confine yourself to the Bill.

Mr. M.Y. Ally: Yes, sir. I am referring to Guyana Gajraj, a firm which was importing foodstuffs.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Ally, I have ruled and I will not permit you to mention anything not relevant to the debate.

Mr. M.Y. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I should like to remind you that Guyana Gajraj is mentioned in this Bill we are debating.

Mr. Speaker: I have already ruled Mr. Yacoob Ally.

Mr. M.Y. Ally: Sir, I am asking that this Government despite the policy that it has created in the past should try and revert and see that we do something for the working-class peoples of our country. When we suffer the poor man, we are suffering ourselves. Unless and until this Government can change its policy that we are Guyanese first and anything after, our country will be doomed forever.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Roshan Ally.

Mr. R. Ally: Mr. Speaker, according to this Bill before the House, the Government wants to make the Rice Marketing Board a corporation. The rice farmers, in general, believed that the Government will do exactly what the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture promised them when he spoke to them at Anna Regina, Essequibo. On the 7th June, 1968 the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture told the rice farmers at Anna Regina in Essequibo thi

“The Rice Marketing Board will continue in existence but will assume a new role in the industry. The Board will perform the functions of a producers’ market co-operative. In this way producers will assume an increased amount of responsibility for management of the Board, and the Board will continue as a statutory organisation for the purchase of rice on the local market and to those markets such as the commonwealth Caribbean countries which the Guyana Government may have a contractual obligation.”

This is what the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture promised farmers and this is what really the farmers were looking forward to. They were not looking forward to the Government taking over the Rice Marketing Board from them. Everyone of us here knows that when the hon. Members on the Government side today were in the Opposition, the Prime Minister, who was then Leader of the Opposition, told this House in plain words that the then Government was a “rice” Government and a “coolie” Government. In other words, he was telling the House that the rice industry really belongs to the “coolie” in this country. This is the reason why since they took office they are doing everything possible so as to destroy the rice industry. The very first thing they have done was to have lowered the price of rice and the grade of rice, then they have increased the price per bag. They took away the subsidy for insecticides and weedicides, duty free gasoline. They also took the shot guns away from the rice farmers and left the rice crops to be attacked by wild ducks and other birds.

This caused the rice farmers to be very worried at the moment. They believed what the Prime Minister said when he was in the Opposition, that he would put it into practice when he got into office. He told this House that he has no interest in rice whatsoever only when it appears before him in a plate. This is what he said when he was in the Opposition. This Rice Marketing Board should have been a rice farmers co-operative today instead of the State thinking of taking over the Board and giving the Prime Minister, this very enemy of the rice industry, the power so as to nominate people from the top to the bottom to run the Board. The rice farmers believed that the Prime Minister will do nothing else but nominate people who will agree with him to destroy the rice industry. The rice farmers believe this, and it cost the rice farmers their sweat and blood;

many of them their ancestors shed tears in the rice industry so as to build it and put it where it is today. It is a hard thing for this Government to destroy such an industry.

Mr. Speaker, I believe Members on the Government side of this House should try to persuade the hon. Prime Minister to amend this part of the Bill and allow the rice farmers to have elected members on the Board. The Prime Minister told us today that he had talks with the Minister of Labour that he should consult with the T.U.C. for having workers' members on the Board. *[Interruption]* The farmers are people who produce rice; workers are people working on the Board. We believe that people will be placed in this Rice Corporation who will have no experience where the rice industry is concerned.

6 p.m.

This Bill states that people with agricultural experience will be placed there, but agriculture does not mean rice farming alone. It could mean cassava farming, coconut farming, cattle farming. It does not necessarily indicate a man who has experience in rice and who knows the hardship. We have gained a lot of experience since this Government came into office.

There were then three members of the Rice Producers' Association on the Rice Marketing Board. When the Rice Marketing Board and the Rice Action Committee decided to buy agricultural machines, those R.P.A. members advised them not to buy those machines because they knew how the organisations handle these machines, and it would not be profitable. They did not listen to the R.P.A. members. Because they had the majority on the Board, they went ahead and purchased those machines. Those machines are not being hired at the moment so they put all on sale for little or nothing. They were unable to maintain them. Many of them were left in the mud. There was an experience at Black Bush Polder. All these things mean great losses to the rice farmers.

I should like to point out that not only I but ricefarmers are very much worried. We believe this Government is aiming at nothing but destroying the rice industry. The Government does not really believe that we on this side of the House will be able to support such a Bill because we know that this Government is giving the rice farmers no say in their own industry. There are so many things today that face the rice industry and when this present Government is asked to do something, especially where the rice industry is concerned, it has nothing to do with it.

Only a few days ago, the hon. Prime Minister was sitting in his seat and the hon. Leader of the Opposition was then on the Floor advising the hon. Prime Minister that he should not go back to Linden and asking if he thought he could do it, he should go back now. Then he pointed to his head and he said, "Look at my head, Cheddi, you haven't got eyes, and look at yours. If you not seeing, then feel it", which means in other words that our present Prime Minister, one who took this honour upon himself because the people of this country did not give him the mandate to be the Prime Minister or any of those Members on the other side of the House to be where they are as the Government today, believes in race.

I feel that since the citizens of Guyana did not give the present members of the Government the mandate to be there, they have no right to dictate to the people, especially what they are trying to do at the moment. I think that this should be done in a country-wide election now, if the Government wants to convert the Rice Marketing Board into a State Corporation. The hon. Prime Minister, who is not here, should rethink on this issue of the Rice Marketing Board, and give the farmers the opportunity to elect their members and form a rice co-operative instead of a state corporation. Thank you.

Mr. Hamid: When one considers the Public Corporations (Amendment) Bill, 1971, there seems to be much in common with what Members on this side of the House have been saying time and again. The Bill, when enacted, would tend to encourage certain individuals in the government, by virtue of the high position in which they will be placed, to use their powers to

appoint other persons to fill the vacancies on political grounds. While some people may say that it will be the best thing to put persons on these corporations to serve the interest of the party concerned, one has to consider the many other failures in the different sectors. There should be some sort of correction or some point of stopping.

It is reported that a civil servant by the name of Mr. David Yankana has made a statement pointing to the inefficiency and lack of profitability of the public corporations, and this statement has highlighted fears that have been expressed in many quarters.

6.10 p.m.

This is, in fact, a very good statement. I take it to mean that the Prime Minister, who has quite a lot of confidence in this individual, has made it possible for this Bill to be brought before the House.

We do not want to support this Bill for many reasons. While past experience has shown the waste of public funds in the many corporations, the time has come when, as the Prime Minister rightly said, we should have meaningful participation when appointments are to be made to boards, committees or corporations as the case may be.

The Prime Minister has instructed the hon. Minister of Home Affairs, for example, to make it look as though he is offering the P.P.P. members an opportunity to serve on boards and committees, but the Government is not appointing P.P.P. members to boards and committees that are meaningful. They should know that when members on this side of the House serve on boards and committees this will be a means of stopping corruption at its helm. Nothing else will be able to stop this sort of thing.

It is precisely on these points that I intend to base my arguments. I know that I may sound a bit far-fetched but I crave your indulgence, sir, and hope that you will allow me this

opportunity to speak. As I said, the Bill will give the Prime Minister power to place supporters of the P.N.C. in position at such remuneration and on such terms and conditions with respect to pensions, gratuities and other benefits, as the Government deems necessary. We will always think that if one is placed on these corporation boards, one will have to consider all these factors. Again, I wish to reiterate what Mr. Yankana has said, namely, that because of this policy there has been inefficiency in these corporations.

Let us divert a little and see what has happened in Parliament proper: The Prime Minister is speaking about qualified personnel to be placed on these boards, committees, and what have you. He himself has appointed technocrats in Parliament. Where are they today? They cannot be seen. Why? Because they themselves have seen the corrupt attitude of the Government. Some of them came from the firm of Bookers and joined the P.N.C. Government. They served as technocrats and then were taken back by the firm. Mr. Thomas, Mrs. Gaskin, the former Minister of Education, and Mr. Martin Carter were employed by Bookers. I think Dr. Ptolemy Reid was also formerly employed by Bookers. Why? Is it that the Government is working in collusion with Bookers so that Bookers' interests will be protected when its henchmen are placed in the industries? Where are we going? Because of the corrupt practices and the things that were happening, these people apparently thought it was better for them to leave.

Let us consider some of these other members who came here and served the Government, some as Ministers. They failed miserably. Let us consider the case of Mrs. Gaskin, who was formerly a Minister. A back bencher on the Government side, by the name of Mr. T. Anson Sancho, called her a nincompoop and that disturbed the Minister greatly. Eventually she left her Ministry but was given a big job in the West Indies as Guyana's representative.

What can we get out of the policy of using political hacks, placing them in prominent positions, making provision for gratuities, pensions and fat salaries and wasting taxpayers' money? Where are we going? There are other examples. Lately another technocrat, the Minister

of Health, became so “fed up” that she packed her trunks and heaved out. What I am saying is in relation to what Mr. Yankana said. The former Minister of Health pulled out of this country and left behind her in the Ministry of Health a loan for \$4,859,853, for which the Public Accounts Committee cannot get an account.

That is where the trouble started. Her husband turned his collar to the other side of his head and was no longer called “Reverend”. A religious man who, it is claimed, should not preach politics, he is at the United Nations as a political representative of this Government. This is the pay-off. Apparently what Mr. Yankana has said has not yet been understood by the Prime Minister and his Government, but it is of great significance.

There was a Speaker of the National Assembly. We said we did not want him because he was a kind of “We don’t know where” person. I do not like to use words like “flip-flop” but I hope Your Honour will be able to give me hearing on this. This person served his term of office in practically every Government. He was a giant, so to speak, in capacity. You are laughing, sir, but I hope that you, too, may be given certain remuneration when the time comes. *[Laughter]* What did we get from the honourable Member who was sitting there at the head? Eventually, when he had served his term of office – he must have reached the age for pension or gratuity – what was he given? He now represents this country in Canada and in the United States of America.

6.20 p.m.

And in lieu of his position, he has given Guyara Gajraj Limited which is now becoming a co-operative under this Bill. These are the paybacks and the little strings that are attached. These are the little things which we on this side of the House may wish to reiterate for the benefit of those who seem to forget. My hon. Friend and Colleague Mr. Yacoob Ally took time off to quote the *Hansard* and he spoke with authority. This Government apparently is not mindful of producing *Hansards* regularly to date because of what we are saying on this side of the House; by not

producing the *Hansardson* time we cannot get it to say what was said by other previous speakers time and again.

Your Honour, let us take for example this paper, the *Liberator*, a very influential paper, a paper apparently which the Government even wants to suppress. We have a photograph here of the first gentleman of the Parliament – the Prime Minister with his top hat and his old colonial system of dress going to pay tribute to the late Sir Winston Churchill, weeping over his grave, paying homage to his master. This is what causes a series of arguments and the Government wanting to foreclose this paper, because of the publication. I did not want to take time off to quote from the *Mirror*. I just want to show that we could also quote from other newspapers.

Let us take for example the Government subsidy to the Guyana Marketing Corporation. For the year 1965 it amounted to \$1,255,000; for 1966 –

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

Mr. Hamid: Your Honour, please sir, I can remember carefully that we had a special meeting in which you called me and asked me certain things in relation to this Home. I do not know what is the point of order raised, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member ought to tell us what he is quoting from. This House ought to be given the courtesy. **Mr. Hamid:** The hon. Member seems not to be paying attention to what I said. I said I am quoting from the *Liberator*.

The Prime Minister: Which issue?

Mr. Hamid: June 1971, on page 2. Government subsidy, as I said, to the Guyana Marketing Corporation for the year 1965 amounted to \$1,255,000; for 1966 it was in the vicinity of \$2,409,506; for 1968 \$500,000; for 1969 \$700,000, and again in 1970 \$500,000. In April

1967, Government advanced \$80,000 to the Guyana Marketing Corporation for the importation of edible oil with interest at 6 per cent to be repaid at a minimum rate of \$10,000 per week as from August 15, 1967. Sir, at December 31, 1967 only \$20,000 had been repaid. This is that happens when you put political hacks to head these Corporations.

If the Prime Minister is afraid of Mr. Eusi Kwayana let him say so, and if he wants to put him here for the purpose of maintaining order in Buxton or in the Demerara Bauxite Company, let him say so, but now the man has been out of his position because of political appointments and again I say what Mr. Yankana was saying all along seems to be the correct answer and it will continue indefinitely.

Let us go again and see what has happened here. The Guyana Telecommunications Corporation was established in 1967. Audited accounts for the period 31st March, 1967 to 31st December, 1967 have not been sent to the Auditor. With respect to the Guyana Airways Corporation this is what is reported by the Auditors:

“I have not seen the audited accounts for the years 1963 to 1967, and as far as I am aware they have not been laid in the National Assembly in accordance with the statutory requirements.”

These are the forces, this is what this Bill, when enacted, will do to carry on similar activities. The people are constantly being asked to tighten their belts and to make sacrifices for the Republic. Is it a squander mania Republic? What are we talking about the Co-operative Republic when there is no meaningful participation one way or the other? Where are we going? My colleague the hon. Member Mr. Balchand Persaud made a statement.

Let us see what happened here with a school teacher. Before I quote this, sir, let me say what I heard over the radio and it was also mentioned here by the hon. Prime Minister and maybe other Members. What did they say? It was said that the P.P.P. took a tailor and made him the Chairman of the Electricity Corporation. This is true, and I may add to that and say that the tailor who was appointed to serve as the Chairman of the Electricity Corporation was not the

tailor like some of these giant tailors we have he could not make a jacket, all he could have made was pants. The important thing was that he paid off for the assets of the Electricity Corporation a year and a half ahead of time. This is the significant point. Let us look at this schoolteacher who called a Minister a nincompoop and he did not retain his seat in this House, but he was given a payoff and he was made Chairman of that Corporation. Mr. Sancho, a school teacher competent to perform this function as a school teacher, why was it necessary for him to go to London when Mr. David Spence, the Corporation's Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineer was already in London doing what he was going there to do. What was he going there to do? He went as Chairman of the Guyana Electricity Corporation. He left for the United Kingdom to hold discussions with the English Electric Company and to inspect machinery needed as replacement for the expansion programme in which the Corporation is now engaged. There you had public funds spending down the line. Mr. Sancho had to go despite Mr. Spence being there, all because he was the Chairman of the Corporation and, having the power, he found it possible to waste taxpayers' money to go to London and have a wonderful time. When this Bill becomes enacted where will Government find the money?

6.30 p.m.

They have not got the money. Let me give you a little gist of what is happening in this country, sir.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps this may be a convenient time to have the suspension.

Mr. Hamid: I would like just five minutes more sir, because I will not be able to return on time.

Mr. Speaker: The sitting is suspended until 8 o'clock.

Sitting suspended at 6.30 p.m.

8.10 p.m.

On resumption --

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now resume the debate on the Bill. When the Adjournment was taken, the hon. Member Mr. Naccie Hamid was speaking. [*Pause*] The hon. Member Mr. Chandisingh.

Mr. Chandisingh: Mr. Speaker, this Bill before the House is one which the hon. Prime Minister has said should not attract controversy. We on this side, however, have found in it certain objectives which do not necessarily square with the four or five points which were adduced in support of this measure by the hon. Prime Minister. In no far as those arguments go, in other words, to tighten control etc. of these public corporations, assuming these to be the only reasons for such a measure, one would be inclined to feel that this Bill is ill-conceived. If, on the other hand, as we on this side have been saying, the provisions of this Bill would have other implications, well then, it is more open to question and challenge.

Take the first aspect of it, namely, the requirements for effecting better control etc. of the many public undertakings and corporations. I should like to suggest that the Government has been from time to time bringing up various devices; it has been, so to speak, stumbling from one position to another in a vain effort to extricate itself from some of the mounting difficulties which it has been facing. I would feel that this new structure, which we are asked to approve tonight, will not solve these problems. It will further aggravate the seriousness of the existing difficulties.

What seems to be in the Government's mind is to centralise control at the top, to concentrate more powers, as it were, at the top, and we would like to feel that one of the main

problems that is being faced today in our country, not only with respect to the running of these corporations and public undertakings, but also in every aspect of social, political and economic life, is the problem of tightening control at the top without mass involvement and participation below.

The Bill before us, although there is a provision, as the hon. Prime Minister has pointed to, to include a workers' representative on the corporation, nevertheless, I would be inclined to feel that is not the answer to the whole question of involvement of the people including the workers. I would be inclined to feel that this is rather a bit of window dressing in the whole circumstances of the requirements of the day. What is needed now is not greater centralisation or concentration of power at the top but an extension of democracy at all levels. What is needed, in our opinion, is more democratic control which in itself would provide the basis for eliminating some of the drawbacks, some of the problems that presently are being faced.

We hold that the involvement of the masses is one of the main requirements for progress in any field, particularly in a country such as ours, an underdeveloped country or developing country, whatever name we wish to use. For a new State that has recently gained sovereignty, it has been found by experience in all the other areas of the world, that in those cases where power is more and more concentrated at the top, and where the people are not brought into wide participation, such countries tend to stagnate. Problems not only increase but they compound. Bureaucracy is compounded upon bureaucracy. On the other hand, in those countries, the newly-sovereign States, where the regimes in power have sought and have been able to implement more and more popular control, we see that giant steps are being taken to total general progress.

For a long time we have been making observations such as these and this latest proposal before us tonight, we feel, is another indication that this Government has not yet seen the wisdom or the necessity for making a complete about turn in its thinking in so far as development is concerned. More specifically, we heard earlier on, certain eulogies for the experts or expertise. We were told, not only from the Government side, but also by the hon. Member Mr.

Sutton, that it would be a good thing for us to have real experts in all these corporations and boards to run things.

We take a different view from this. We are not against experts. As a matter of fact, we have to rely, to a large extent, on experts and expertise. We have to cherish experts, their specialised knowledge. But it is a fact also that experts who are divorced from the realities of the day, who are not in touch with the people, with their practical problems, with their psychology, with their present ways of thinking, and so on, such experts, no matter how good they may be in their particular field, whether it be rice, whether it be telecommunications, civil aviation, what have you, cannot by themselves, without the participation of broader areas of the public, introduce those changes which are necessary to propel our country forward.

8.20 p.m.

One point that I should like to make in connection with the question of expertise and experts is this: Those of us who have been Ministers in the past or who are Ministers now must know that although politicians, so to speak, rely very heavily and must rely very heavily on expert opinion and advice, quite often expert opinion when translated to the field of public policy is at variance with the requirements of the situation.

Politicians and persons who are expected to be close to the people must know their social psychology and must play a role in ensuring that experts do not hold back progress by hanging on to the old order.

In this respect, I wish to remind the hon. Member Mr. Sutton that although his liking for experts has been expressed so strongly, many of the experts in our society today, by virtue of their training and by virtue of the past society in which they worked, are unwilling to bring their minds to adopt new attitudes. They tend sometimes to stick to the old order and it is in this

respect that we wish to sound a note of warning and to make the position very clear. I am not suggesting that there must be no experts but there must be a certain amount of balance.

What the Government seems to be doing, from our ruling of the proposed legislation, is attempting to concentrate more and more authority in the hands of experts. Many persons, as my colleagues have mentioned, who may not be considered experts in the strict sense of the word, are very knowledgeable about the problems of the people in specific fields such as rice.

We fear that if the passage of this legislation results in the denuding of the corporations' committees and boards of such persons, or if it reduces them to such a minute proportion of these bodies, then we are going to have even greater difficulties in the future than the difficulties which the Government now says it is seeking to correct.

I do not wish to be lengthy on this question since many of the points have already been made, but I should like to refer to two matters: one with reference to the Guyana Broadcasting Station. I should like to ask, since to have not heard anything, specific about this, what is to be the position with respect to this undertaking which the Government is operating and controlling. We understand that this was one of the earliest undertakings that the Government took over and since we have not had an opportunity to debate it – from memory, I do not think that this matter has ever been brought to the House or that any White Paper has been tabled on the conditions, the terms and so on of this takeover – we would like to know what will be the position of this radio station in relation to GUYSTAC. Will this station also fall under the umbrella of GUYSTAC?

The reason for asking this question is that we would very much like to know: what is the financial position of this radio station after its first year of operation under Government control? Is it losing money? Or is it working at a profit? How are its financial operations being audited? How are accounts being kept? Is there a board controlling this station or will there be a board which will come under GUYSTAC?

The information we obtained was when the former Minister of Information, Mr. Martin Carter, said that Mr. Cholmondeley was Manager and Mr. Nascimento was an adviser. We are not sure what the position is now. What is the general policy of the radio station? Does the station come directly under a Minister? In other words, to whom is the manager of this station responsible? To whom is he answerable? These are some of the questions that we would like to pose in this connection. We also ask whether the Government intends to lay a White Paper on this whole question of Government ownership and policy with respect to broadcasting.

The second matter that I should like to raise is with respect to one of the undertakings which has been listed in this Bill as having Government participation or Government majority participation and that is the Daily Chronicle Limited, The hon. Prime Minister said in his opening remarks that certain of those undertakings are wholly owned by the Government, others are partly owned and I think that, with respect to the Daily Chronicle, this was one of the categories where Government has majority shareholdings.

Similarly, we should like to know what is the position with respect to this company since we have never had, as far as I am aware, any statement or information brought by the Government to this House and to the Guyanese public?

I should like, in passing, to ask whether the Government believes that Government participation in or ownership of such undertakings like the Daily Chronicle, the printing press, is in the best interest of the Guyanese nation. We know that the intention should be to industrialise our country, that the Government should go into undertakings which would help to improve the whole economy of our country. We can see where telecommunications, civil aviation, rice marketing and things like that have some economic value to the Guyanese nation and normally we would have no objection to Government going into such undertakings. In other words, taxpayers' money can be spent to acquire or take over and expand such economic undertaking, but when it comes to a printing press, like the Daily Chronicle, we cannot see the necessity for participating in this. *[Interruption]*

Of course, the hon. Prime Minister has made some remarks in his seat. I do not wish to be diverted into that aspect.

We feel that this move that the Government should take over a printing plant is highly unnecessary from the economic point of view and from the best interest of the Guyanese nation. Is it not a waste of taxpayers' money? This is why we would like to know from the Government what the exact position with respect to this company is. Are losses being made? Is it being run at a profit? How much is being invested in the new expansion that is taking place that we see at the Government Industrial Estate? After all, we do submit that if taxpayers' money is involved in this whole business that the people, the public, and particularly the Parliament of this country are entitled to know about it. Certainly, the hon. Prime Minister should acknowledge that the Government already has quite adequate propaganda media at its disposal without the necessity of having a daily newspaper. One could understand that perhaps the P.N.C. would like to have a press, and we can have no objection to any political party running newspaper propaganda machinery. But we must object and the Guyanese public must condemn such a measure by which the State is brought in to finance a party political paper. This is the point we are making and we hope that the hon. Prime Minister will take note of this. Perhaps the P.N.C. does not have funds so the Government has to come in to assist. *[Interruption]*

Here again, one could understand that if this Government were, let us say, hard pressed by outside or internal reaction, by outside forces of imperialism and local reaction, and it was mobilising the masses of the people to confront such reactionary forces, then one could be sympathetic with the necessity for the Government to acquire more propaganda machinery in order to fight against those forces. This is a different situation, we submit, sir, than the context in which this Government has been seeking to use its powers and the public's finances in order to finance a partisan propaganda medium.

Mr. Speaker, we insist that the Government tell us what would be the policy of this expanded paper that is in the course of being. What policies does this paper intend to support? Would it support the workers in their struggles for better wages and conditions? Would it support and tell the truth about anti-imperialist struggles abroad in other countries? Would it expose imperialism and give solidarity and support to progressive people like Angela Davis in the United States? These are some of the questions and we insist that the Government give us some answers on those very quickly.

Just to wind up, Mr. Speaker, I should like to reiterate our objection to this Bill not because we are against Government controls, Government ownership, but we object to the creation first, of bureaucracy the elimination, the weeding out of more democratic sections or elements of the Guyanese public from active involvement in the Government's undertakings and corporations.

We wish to warn finally that if this policy is carried out and continued that the Guyanese people are going to suffer more and more at the hands of such dictatorial and bureaucratic policies. We, therefore, call upon this Government to scrap this Bill and to begin serious discussions on appropriate methods for avoiding and solving the real problems that exists with respect to Government's undertakings at the present time.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran.

Mr. Ram Karran: Sir, had it not been for the presence of the Mace and of Your Honour, I would have thought when I heard the Prime Minister today that he was making one of the slogans he is so famous for, the slogan of consultative democracy, the slogan that followed, that which is quite contrary to it, "Eat less, sleep less and work more." This one, however, the Guyana State Corporation, seems to run in collision with the last prominent slogan of the P.N.C., the slogan called "Co-operative Republic". But in understanding this, one has to understand the

hon. Prime Minister. In 1953 when he was Minister of Education in a progressive Government, he demanded the abolition of dual control in the schools. But no sooner had he become the

Leader of the Opposition he said, “Man can’t change his mind?” There have been so many changes. Instead of acting on principles he had adumbrated before he has now changed.

It is relevant. My friend the hon. Member Mr. Yacoob Ally read from *Hansard* to show that what the Prime Minister is saying today is not what he believed in 1962, and that has some great relevance in this matter.

This Public Corporations (Amendment) Bill shows us how much the hon. Prime Minister has changed. I want to go beyond that and to make another quotation from the same period. This is what the hon. Prime Minister is reported to have said in column 3543 of *Hansard* of Wednesday, 10th October, 1962. I refer to this specifically because of the answer the Prime Minister gave from his seat to my colleague when asked if the illegal activities going on at the Daily Chronicle continue, what we can do. It reminds me, sir, of the statement he made when we questioned Government funds being used on a house in Belfield. He said, “Do what you like.”

his is what he said;

“... Where are we going, Mr. Speaker? What this House is being asked to do today is to take all of its powers and hand them over to an executive, and that we shall never do – at least the party for which I speak and which I represent will never do it. We agree with public corporations, certainly; but bring each public corporation bill here and we will pass it easily. Then we will know what powers you want and what powers you need, but we are not giving you any blanket authority. So far as we are concerned, that is very clear – and don’t let the thoughts be mixed, don’t let the principles be mixed – we agree with public corporations, but we do not agree with putting into the hands of the Government all these tremendous powers, despite the suavity, I must concede – I almost said unwonted suavity – with which the hon. Premier has tried to gloss over the Second Reading of this Bill.”

This is what the Prime Minister said.

Today, he is taking powers from his own colleagues and he is putting into the hands of experts. He has forgotten technocrats. He is bringing the directors from Bookers and putting power in their hands. We have established that the Prime Minister and the Government do not follow clearly on what they claimed yesteryear and the charges they are making today, but we want to go a little further and quote another member of the PNC, Mr. Merriman, who was later the hon. Minister of Labour, in referring to the Bill which we are amending today.

“What is strange about this Bill is that it seeks to interfere with the plans for private enterprises since, within the present context of the Bill, it seems to clothe the Government, in its venture to create more corporations, with legislation which puts it in a more advantageous position when compared with private enterprise. That is an aspect to be looked at closely because, if the Government endeavours by legislation to dominate the field of industrial development, it will be apparent that the Government seeks to destroy private enterprise. It supports the statement often made by Members of the Government that they are endeavouring to destroy big business.”

He goes on to say that the Government should not seek to place itself in an advantageous position over private enterprise. Is the Government now trying to destroy private enterprise? Surely not! The Government has not changed its philosophy. Merriman is not here but Merriman is in the PNC and I presume that the PNC has not changed its policy. But the Government is probably seeking to destroy private enterprise by being closer to private enterprise. The last quotation I would wish to make from this *Hansard* is from the hon. Prime Minister's speech.

“Now, the Ministers are making it legal for them to interfere and put their fingers into the pie from time to time. Under Clause 16 they will have power to give directions of a general character as to the policy to be followed in the exercise and performance of their functions, and the corporation shall give effect to any such directions. Then, you are going to rob the citizen of a right which he has enjoyed so far.”

The citizen, I presume, is not being robbed unless the Prime Minister is of the view that it is the turn now of the PNC, having slandered the previous administration, to push its hands into the

pan, because from all around and in previous debates, in fact, it is admitted in this debate that things are not going well, but thieving is going on on a large scale. *[Interruption]*

The hon. Minister of Education and the hon. Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Supply, six house lots they have acquired for themselves. No wonder the Prime Minister has got to admit that things are not going too well in the Government corporations. If in the uppermost echelons of the PNC these things can happen, well, one can imagine what is taking place. My friend referred to Billy Carto at the Electricity Corporation, and we know a great deal of what is taking place. But this sloganeering is not going to stop what the hon. Prime Minister tells us that they want to stop.

If we refer to the slogan, “Co-operative Republic” and if we were to look through the so-called Co-operative Republic Budget of 1970 and to read what the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture had to say then – perhaps he is ashamed of the Bill before the House tonight and has chosen to stay away – we would see at page 44:

“We recognise that co-operatives are essentially self-governing organizations, with their basic unit close to the people, and can grow to the best advantage only in an atmosphere of studied self-reliance. But the movement must be nurtured...”

And he goes on. Where is the self-reliance, where is the closeness to the people? I would have thought if the Government had been pursuing its policy of the Co-operative Republic, we would have had a few of these corporations capitalistically oriented into co-operatives, but we do not have that today. Instead, we have a superstructure placed on top of them to bring about greater capitalist exploitation.

Several years have passed, five years, since the presentation of Sessional Paper No. 1 of 1966, at which number we have stopped. We have not had any since that one showing subsidies and losses of public undertakings. The Government had a great deal to say. The Government talks about the huge sums of money that were lost in some of these public corporations because

of its own maladministration, because of its own system of selecting cronies to be put in these positions, and because of the lack of proper directions, etc.

8.50 p.m.

All through this Paper the Government bemoaned what is happening. I quote from page 1:

“In the twenty post-war years ending in 1964 the Government spent about \$210 mn. on development schemes.”

It is farther stated:

“135 mn. – more than the total financed by borrowing – was spent on the renewal and expansion of the capital of revenue-earning public undertakings”

and then the undertakings were listed.

It is significant that most of these corporations, on which this Governor-General of a corporation is to be superimposed, have lost money. Some of them came into being to assist the working class people in this country or to aid in the development of Guyana and it is inevitable that some of them will have to run at a loss.

I refer, for instance, to the Guyana Airways Corporation. It was at first a private company, then it was made into a corporation because the Government at that time felt that if succour was to be given to the tributors, if the porkknockers were to be helped, if agriculture was to be developed in certain remote parts of the country, then the services to those areas would have to be subsidised.

That do we find? We find that the Government, having presented this Sessional Paper in 1966, has now come in the year 1971 to tell us that subsidies are not really necessary. It has not deemed some to be necessary but has grouped all together and said that all must be eliminated, that public corporations must aim at a profit.

Let us take the case of the Guyana Marketing Corporation. It is true that under the last Chairman things were overdone. I refer to the fact that even before the Demerara Bauxite Company was ready to buy cassava starch the whole corporation was filled from top to bottom with cassava starch which could not be disposed of. We were told that there were some queer ideas in the head of the Chairmen of the corporation that starch could have been made into some type of protein. The cassava starch is still there or has been dumped in the Demerara River.

What has happened at the Guyana Marketing Corporation? Instead of the corporation being used to subsidise the cost of living for the farmers who are hard pressed and, indeed, for consumers in general, we find that a great deal of money is wasted. I understand that Mr. Kwayana – I do not know if he has changed his name again to Sydney King since his demotion – bought tons and tons of molasses. The people who were selling it fooled him and said they were selling casareep. This is the sort of thing that is going on. You cannot ask the poor Minister of agriculture because he does not know or, at least, says that he does not know.

In the same Sessional Paper, No. 1 of 1966, the Government admitted that it had to subsidise oil. This had been the policy of the P.P.P. and it was a continuation of that policy to buy the oil at a certain price but retail it to the consumers at a lower price. This was necessary because oil is such an important item. But as soon as this Government came into office it abandoned that subsidy and the housewives are now called upon to pay more for oil. This is due either to the Government's bankruptcy or its difficulties.

We read in the newspapers the other day that the Guyana Marketing Corporation does not owe the manufacturers of oil any money but that there is oil which the Government cannot uplift. The system is for the people to produce the oil and the Government collects it across the bar and pays for it. Because of the Government's inability to pay for the oil when it is ready, an artificial shortage occurs in the country and despite the controlled price of oil housewives have to pay more. They will always have to pay more.

The Government has not said anything about issues like that in this Bill which is before us. Assuming that there is going to be perfection in the administration of the corporations, assuming that the stage is going to be reached where, with Mr. Pat Thompson at the top, all these corporations are going to be run at a profit, then it means that the Government is now not aiming at subsidising or helping the small people in the country who, they say, will be made the "real" people, and the original intention for the setting up of some of these corporations is not going to be pursued at all by the Government.

My colleague, Mr. Wilson, earlier this afternoon referred to the sinecures which were or will be created. What is the position? At the moment a corporation which is responsible for some service under the Ministry of Agriculture is no longer directed by the Minister of Agriculture. It is to be directed by a tycoon at the top who knows nothing about agriculture.

For instance, the corporation handling the Guyana Airways Corporation is going to be directed by a business man and the Minister of Communications, whose ministerial policy ought to guide the corporation in relation to local conditions, in relation to international conventions and what not, sits in his office, holds a sinecure and cannot say a thing because Pat Thompson or his Vice President, directs the corporation. We are moving so near to the American system that we have to adopt the term they use, namely, Vice President.

The other day my friend the hon. Minister of Communications (Mr. Kasim) went over to the West Bank, Demerara, and harassed the bus operators. He told them, "I want to seek good conditions for the passengers." This was at the time when they were moving to set up the Guyana Transport Services. The Government thought that the roads were good and that new buses could be put there. The Minister is no longer interested.

Recently there was a debate on the Guyana Transport Services and the details given were insufficient as you yourself know, sir – two shareholders at \$10 a share and the whole thing is owned by the Government. How the Government's money went into that I do not know, but the Minister of Communications could not get up and say a word. He was over-shadowed completely by the Minister of Finance who speaks for everything in this House.

I am saying that if we are to have good administration in this country a corporation which comes under the Ministry of Agriculture ought to be directed by the Ministry of Agriculture in order that Government's over-all policy might be established. The same thing applies to the corporations under the Ministry of Communications or the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. That is the only way to have the corporation operating in line with Government's policy unless, as my friend and colleague Mr. Wilson said, the Prime Minister wants to set up sinecures for all his Ministers and he and his top boys are going to run the corporations.

9 p.m.

But we are told that GUYBAU is exempted, that the bauxite company is not going to come under Guystac. Why? They say that salaries and conditions of service are different. The hon. Prime Minister gave us the ridiculous illustration of a man in a corporation who said that his messenger was getting more than a messenger in the Public Service merely because he was working with a corporation. I wonder if the Prime Minister has not recognised or has forgotten that the same

salaries, wages, and conditions of service still exist in the bauxite operations and will prevail as the trade unions become more organised. In fact, you do not have to wait until then.

What is the position with the Guyana Airways Corporation? Is the Prime Minister going to tell us that the differences relate only to messengers? Airways workers are of a different category to transportworkers. You cannot pay a porter who has to load an aircraft a scientific basis to see that the aircraft is balanced the same wages as you will pay another porter.

The porters in the Guyana Airways Corporation have to receive higher wages because their work is vastly different to the work of porters in the Transport and Harbours Department. You cannot have a corporation sitting on top saying that "X" in the Guyana Airways Corporation must get "Y" dollars per month and "B" in the Transport and Harbours Department get the same "Y" dollars. Because it is only the corporations which are near to the operation will have knowledge of all these things. The same applies to a fishing trawler. Supposing the Government was to set up a fishing corporation in the country, is it going to relate wages and service in that organisation with conditions prevailing in Water Street - \$4 per day or whatever it is? Obviously it has to relate it to the people in the shipping industry or something near to that. *The same thing applies to the Rice Marketing Board. Whilst they are employees of the Rice Marketing Board and are not employees of the waterfront their wages and salaries and conditions of service have got to be related to the wages and salaries of the waterfront.*

The illustration which was made by the hon. Prime Minister that this President is going to fix wages and salaries and see that all messengers get the same thing can be easily done by the Cabinet. In fact, that is how it should be done. If the strong point in the argument is that wages and salaries and conditions of service is what is bothering the Prime Minister and the Government that problem can be solved by means other than the establishment of this superstructure.

We were talking about GUYBAU a minute ago and we find that this concern is not going to come under the umbrella of this Public Corporations (Amendment) Bill. Why? This is a private company. [The Prime Minister: "What is it?"] GUYBAU is registered as a private company. Private companies enjoy certain immunities. For instance, their business need not be made public. If the attitude of the hon. Prime Minister with respect to the Daily Chronicle is going to be pursued to its end, then we can assume that the activities of GUYBAU are not going to be made public although, as in the case of the Daily Chronicle, as in the case of the Guyana Broadcasting Station, as in the case of several concerns which Government has put in money of the inhabitants then it means that taxpayers' money is going to be used in these concerns and we may have to refer to the attitude or to the statement made by Mr. Merriman when he said in this House that somebody is trying to put somebody's hands in this matter.

Another very strange occurrence with respect to these is the rather suspicious and smelly operation. I hope that the Government is not so thick-skinned as not to realise that this in all over the country. In the case of these corporations, the Director of Audit is virtually barred from doing any audit in these concerns. Friends of the Prime Minister and of the Government, Stoll and Thomas, are the auditors – I do not know what position they may hold. [*Interruption by the hon. Prime Minister.*] Most of the Corporations. It is only the Electricity Corporation and I think one other – I cannot be sure – that is being audited by those English people. Unless they have changed. [*Interruption by the hon. Prime Minister.*]

In 1962 the hon. Prime Minister must recall that the Audit Department only was geared to take care only of all the Government Departments. In fact, the Director of Audit had such a small office and such a small staff that it was necessary to give Government the opportunity, if the Director of Audit was unable to audit any concern, to use auditors from outside. When we were negotiating with the Guyana Electricity Corporation the consortium which helped the Guyana Government insisted on auditors from outside. I think it was Price Waterhouse from the United Kingdom. That is the history of this outside auditor.

Since then, up to the moment, if this Parliament or the Government decides to hand over all the corporations for audit, the Director of Audit will be unable to do it because of the closeness of the Government's hand in so far as staff is concerned. It is only recently that the Director of Audit has been able to get staff for which his predecessor had been agitating for a number of years. This Government has always been agitating about the democracy which prevails in India. The Director of Audit in India, who holds a post comparable to the post of Director of Audit here, has the right to audit all the accounts of the corporations. India has moved a great deal more in this direction.

May I mention that, speaking to me officially, the Director of Audit told me that several months ago he had sent his last Report to the Ministry of Finance, and they say that the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee is responsible. What is it doing in the Ministry of Finance for months? Is it being studied for months or is it being cooked up so that it can be printed in a manner satisfactory to the Ministry of Finance? That Ministry's responsibility is to transmit what the Director of Audit submits for Parliament.

I want to refer to the statement by Mr. Semple. The hon. Prime *Minister* told us he is going to isolate all these organisations from political influence. We do not want to disrupt the Government's policy or programme. We want to help the Government. Mr. Semple is not a PPP man. He said that there is so much political interference in the service that they cannot get the people to do their work, yet the hon. Prime Minister talks about political isolation of these boards. I think the hon. Member Mr. Ranji Chandisingh made the point when he referred to the Daily Chronicle. I can only say if the Government persists in this manner of administering the country and misgoverning the country, and utilising public funds without proper accounting, that the day is going to catch up with it. [*Applause*]

The Prime Minister (replying): Mr. Speaker, sir, it seems to me that it is generally agreed that a certain measure of co-ordination is necessary, that some organisation and institution must be responsible for setting out the criteria in respect of matters of personnel. We were regaled with the alarming proposal that the proper agency for such detailed matter is the Cabinet. Mr. Speaker, there are some of us shoemakers who stick to our lasts. Unfortunately, I do not have in my Cabinet any rear admirals, any persons claiming to be professionals in these areas, and consequently it seems to me that there has been put forward no argument against this institution, Guystac.

Our good and humourous and hon. Friend Mr. Harry Lall suggested that the structure here envisaged is aimed at denuding the Ministers of their powers, but then that remark, which, of course, was repeated in some different forms by other members of the Opposition, is proof of that fact that those making it has not read, or if they had read, had not understood the Bill, for if one looks at clause 2 of the Bill and looks at the proposed 2C subclause (2), one will see in what areas Guystac is supposed to exercise control and to give directions.

The purpose is to secure co-ordination of the functions of the public corporations or other corporate bodies in respect of matters relating to personnel including conditions of service, finance, management and organisation in any such public corporation or other corporate body. But then again, Mr. Speaker, let us look at the schedule of Amendments to specific statutes. Let us look at the Amendment to section 16 of the Public Corporations Ordinance and let us get on to subsection 4; we see mention of the right of the Minister to call for certain information and to have certain facilities extended.

9.20 p.m.

Let us look again at subsection (1) of the same Section 16 and we see that –

“...the Minister assigned responsibility for a particular corporation may give to the corporation directions of a general character as to the policy to be followed by the corporation in the exercise and performance of their functions and the corporation shall give effect to any such directions.”

The theory behind this two-party system, Government and Opposition, is that the Opposition must oppose so as to put the Government on its toes, but the Opposition first of all must be literate. First of all, the members of the Opposition must be willing to read; then they must be able to read; and thirdly they must be able to understand what they have read.

It is in the context of these, enacted in black and white, that one hears the accusation that the Prime Minister is denuding his colleague Ministers of all their powers with respect to corporations and gathering all into his hands. When GUYSTAC, for instance, is substituted for a Minister let us see where this applies. Let me read section 11 of the substantive legislation:

“A corporation, with the approval of a Minister, may, subject to the express provisions of this Ordinance, make rules...”

In this section, for the word “Minister” there will be substituted the phrase “Guyana State Corporation”. What are the rules going to be about:

- “(a) governing the proceedings of the corporation and the manner and transaction of their business;
- (b) prescribing the manner in which documents, cheques, and instruments of any description shall be signed or executed on behalf of the corporation;
- (c) prescribing the circumstances in which members of the corporation may receive travelling and subsistence allowances and fixing the rates of such allowances;
- (d) imposing fees in such cases as maybe determined by the corporation;
- (e) generally for the exercise of their power and duties.”

Are those not obviously duties which any Minister would prefer to shed and to hand over to an organisation like GUYSTAC? Wherever the Ministerial powers have been taken away and given to GUYSTAC it is in instances like this. Eves have them and cannot read.

In section 14 of the Public Corporations Ordinance, where the Minister's powers are removed and given to GUYSTAC, they are powers to decide on the remuneration of each member of the board of the corporation. Does a Minister want to be dithering with that sort of thing if there is going to be a proper agency, a competent agency, to deal with it?

I have to read section 19, subsection (2) of the substantive legislation because I do not think it is so much a question of illiteracy as a question of blindness:

“The power of a corporation to borrow shall be exercisable only with the approval of a Minister...”

If the corporation is basically a business organisation and the holding company is a business organisation which has an over-view of all of the corporations, who is better suited to exercise those powers, a Minister or the corporation? So far as I am concerned I would prefer – and I am sure my colleagues who have responsibility for corporations would also prefer because I have discussed it with them – that these powers be exercised by an agency like GUYSTAC.

As an old politician I saw the gambit. The members of the Opposition did not have anything to say but they had to say something so they decided on two tactics. The first was to seek to sow dissension. This is not the P.P.P.; this is a strong party, a well-knit party, all of the members of which have only one pay day. On the one hand one hears that the Prime Minister is assuming all of those powers. One hears that the boards are badly run. We concede that there are many weaknesses. How are you to cure that? Do not remove the laymen! Once again, it is a case of blindness and not illiteracy. I like to be charitable because if one looks at the proposed

structure of GUISTAC, apart from the President and Vice President, Secretary, representatives of corporate bodies, predominantly owned by Government, there is provision for five others. If one looks at the proposed structure of the other public corporations under section 34 of the Public Corporations Ordinance, there is a provision for three others in addition to the workers' representatives. What is this for? They say you must have people who have experience in agriculture. Very well. They show a marvellous insight into the perfectly obvious and masquerade falsely as descendants of Columbus. For what other reason was the discretion given to add three others in the case of ordinary corporations and five others in the case of GUYSTAC? I repeat: It is not that they had something to say, but that they had to say something. They speak of the involvement of the masses. Lineal descendants of Ananias and biggest hypocrites of all times! In 1962 there were no masses? Look through the Ordinance and do not let them tell you that the Constitution precluded them from having workers' representation in the Ordinance of 1962, because I as a lawyer will tell them they lie to the teeth. *[Interruption]* In 1962 they had an opportunity to put workers' representatives on the boards. They did not. Now they come here and say we should have more. Very well, we are putting one now and more will come, but the P.P.P. when in office in 1962 put absolutely none. **[Mr. Ram Karran:** "That is not true."] Show where it is proscribed by law! If necessary, I shall lend you a pair of bifocals or a magnifying glass. **[Miss Field-Ridley:** "That will not help."] Then it is a question of illiteracy and not blindness. The ailment is not ocular but mental. **[Mr. Jagan:** "You cannot insult members of the House."] As the President of the West Indian Court of Appeal once told a certain lawyer, "English is still the official language of these Courts."

A question was asked about G.B.S., a reasonable question, but if my hon. Friends had listened to me I said that from time to time other corporate bodies will be added to the Schedule. G.B.S. was one I had in mind. **[Mr. Ram Karran:** "Why did you not call the name?"] Because "de minimis non curat Burnham". The hon. acting Leader of the Opposition who says that Easter Monday falls on August Monday – in a letter which he wrote to the Prime Minister – **[Mr. Jagan:** "He did not say so."] He implied that, because he subsequently told me he was asking me for something to be done on Easter week-end, but he really meant the August week-end. He goes

out of his way to suggest that what I said in opening this debate was that all the corporations must make a profit, but I particularly said as follows:

9.30 p.m.

“That save where there is a clear policy declaration and position they must take a profit.” It is, therefore, in that context to remindus that some of these activities undertaken by the Corporations will not be profitable *per se* but that there will have to be subsidies. But perhaps this gives me an opportunity to explain how the Government proposes to handle subsidies. The P.P.P. adopted a method of subsidy which unfortunately we followed which method allowed the subsidy to be veil for inefficiency.”

If say the Guyana Airways' Corporation, as a result of a policy decision, has to undertake services into an area which will not be economically remunerative what then is identified is the particular Ministry that it will be serving. If it in to take crops out, that will be the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture will then be given the subsidy and will then ensure that G.A.C. is paid economic rates. Therefore, so far as the G.A.C. is concerned it is not carrying anybody's subsidy. The Ministry of Agriculture will be carrying its own subsidy.

Though there will still be subsidies in proper cases, the subsidies will not be to the Corporations but will be to the agencies responsible for the particular uneconomic undertaking. We hope by this means to ensure efficiency. Because what has happened in many of these corporations where there have been subsidies is that everything is blamed on the fact that they carry out certain services uneconomically and therefore you find some very strange antics. We feel this is the way to tackle it.

But one does not have to be a Columbus to realise that with the opening up of the Interior there have to be subsidies. One does not have to be a Columbus to recognise that in certain sectors or sections of the Guyana Marketing Corporation it may be necessary that subsidies be involved. What I thought was more interesting was a question raised in the Lobby by my hon.

Friend Mr. Balchand Persaud and I thought that a question like that was much more important than the irrelevancies and the snide remarks. He said that in his view the Guyana Marketing Corporation was making a mistake subsidising - assuming that his facts are correct - the consumers' consumption rather than subsidising the farmers. Now a point like that is interesting and it is important, you may or may not agree with it, but at least it gives evidence of some thought and some attempt to get at a policy adumbration. But this nonsense, these irrelevancies by some of the other speakers were not boring, but disgusting.

As I had to say, I found agreement amongst my Opposition friends when we were in the Lobby, that in every political party you have a division of labour, you have your shouters, you have your loud mouth fellows. I would not embarrass them by calling their names. [*Interruption by Mr. Ram Karran.*] You see a political party, Mr. Speaker, is like any other big organisation, it has specialisation and the Leader of the Opposition must not come to me when I ask him for names and submit people who are obviously better fitted with other skills than those required for serving on boards. The Government honestly would like to involve the Opposition but the Opposition must also be serious and sensible because the Prime Minister owes a duty to the nation. The Opposition must not choose which it will serve on and which it will not serve on. Why would not the Opposition serve on the Belfield Girls School Board? They have an interest in the people. [*Interruption*]

Then to nail the lie further, let it be known that the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall accepted appointment on the National Insurance Board and then subsequently there was a P.P.P. General Council meeting where he was instructed to resign as a G.A.W.U. nominee. I understood him to be President, in reality, of the G.A.W.U. The M.P.C.A. man was there and the G.A.W.U. man was put. Mr. Speaker, there must be a certain consistency and let me say here and now so far as GUYSTAC is concerned, so far as the subsidiary corporation is concerned, Government is prepared to consult with the Leader of the Opposition with respect to appointments but this particular Prime Minister will not accept every Tom, Dick and Harry.

Mr. Speaker, I think that I have alluded to some of the points of some substance. Finally, I want to say this and I admit that I am allowing myself to follow the red herring: The Government has decided to go into printing and publishing. That decision is irreversible. Printing, I cannot see it being objected to as a Government activity by the Opposition when the Leader of the Opposition asked a question about having things printed abroad. [*Interruption by Mr. Ram Karran.*]. Printing is a necessary activity in any civilised society, and if Government is to ensure that there is local printing what better form of assurance is there than the Government owning a printery.

9.40 p.m.

And if the P.P.P behaves itself and puts up proper names, its representatives will be able to be there and see what is happening, even though they may try to sabotage in favour of the New Guyana Company Limited, but then that is old machinery. If the Government owns the printery, it is entitled to have a newspaper published. I do not see the offence. We are not preventing anyone else from having a newspaper. We are merely having a newspaper printed and published.

The *Mirror* can continue in existence, it will continue to receive advertisements; the *Catholic Standard* can continue; the *Sun* can continue; the *Guyana Graphic* can continue; the *Evening Post* can continue; the *Truth* can continue; even the *New Nation* can continue, but, Mr. Speaker, only the best will survive and that I think is what really worries my hon. Friend.

This enactment, that we are putting here, is the best we can think of in the circumstances for ensuring the proper and necessary co-ordination, for ensuring the sort of control which is necessary when there is a big and diverse empire. If, later, the Opposition has any sound proposals, we are prepared to listen to them but what was significant is that we were told why this is going to fail and the only alternative we had was the suggestion that the Cabinet be used as a co-ordinating agency, an agency which was used in our predecessors' time and which failed woefully, an agency which was used in our time and failed woefully. And it is understandable

why it failed, because a Cabinet cannot be the co-ordinating agency. The Cabinet can be a co-ordinating agency for policy. It cannot be a co-ordinating agency for the running in a business-like fashion of these undertakings. In the circumstances I commend the Bill to the House and ask that it be read a Second time. *[Applause]*

Question put.

Mr. Ram Karran: Division

Assembly divided: Ayes 27, Noes 11, as follows:

Ayes

Mr. Sutton
 Mrs. Willems
 Mr. Zaheeruddeen
 Mr. Van Sluytman
 Mr. Saffee
 Mr. Jordan
 Mr. Fowler
 Mr. Chan-A-Sue
 Mr. Budhoo
 Mr. Bissember
 Mr. Bancroft
 Miss Ackman
 Mr. Aaron
 Mr. Wrights
 Mr. Thomas
 Mr. Salim
 Mr. Haynes
 Mr. Duncan
 Mr. Joaquin

Noes

Mr. Teekah
 Mr. Remington
 Mr. Balchand Persaud
 Mrs. Branco
 Mr. R. Ally
 Mr. R.D. Persaud
 Mr. M.Y. Ally
 Mr. Wilson
 Mr. D. Jagan
 Mr. Chandisingh
 Mr. Ram Karran - 11

Mr. Mingo
Mr. Clarke
Mr. Ramsaroop
Miss Field-Ridley
Mr. Carrington
Mr. Hoyte
Mr. Kasim
Mr. Burnham - 27

Motion carried

Bill read a second time.

Assembly in Committee.

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

Clause 2

The Chairman: This clause provides for twelve new sections, 2A to 2L, to be inserted in the Principal Ordinance. It is proposed to deal with these twelve new sections separately, especially in respect of two of them. We will therefore commence with subclause 2A.

Subclauses 2A to 2L agreed to.

Subclause 2K

Mr. Sutton: I rise to move the Amendment standing in my name and should like to draw to the attention of the Government that it seems most desirable, as has been suggested in a statement made famous by a Governor in the old colonial days, that justice must not only be done but justice must appear to be done.

I quote section 2K (1):

“The Guyana State Corporation shall keep accounts of their transactions to the satisfaction of the Minister and such accounts shall be audited annually by an auditor appointed by the Minister.”

It would appear to me that you are trying to put the Minister in the difficult position of having to appoint an auditor who will have to report on the implementation of policy set by himself. It is not usual to ask people to sit in judgment of themselves or to give them the power to appoint people to sit in judgment on them.

It would appear that there is no strong reason for departure from the usual practice of having the Director of Audit audits accounts dealing with Government departments. It cannot really be appreciated why there must be an auditor other than the Director of Audit when one bears in mind that human nature, being what it is, an auditor appointed by a Minister may feel he is under an obligation, and that might inhibit him to some extent if he feels that his reports are likely in any way to be considered adverse to the policies or intentions of the Minister.

On the other hand, we know that the Director of Audit is protected under the Constitution and there is no question that he could be penalised or that he could even think in terms of being penalised if he puts up an adverse report on a corporation for which a Minister has responsibility.

I hope that Government will see the wisdom of accepting this Amendment and let it appear not only that it wants to do justice, but that justice is done. Let us have the Director of Audit to audit the accounts of corporations as is done in other Government departments. Perhaps I shall be permitted to carry on with the second proposal dealing with 2L (2) on page 7 of the Bill.

The Chairman: Hon. Member, we propose to deal with this Amendment first.

The Prime Minister: I should like to persuade my hon. Friend not to press this Amendment. I think he is mistaken when he suggests that the appointment of an auditor by a Minister will in any way inhibit the auditing by an auditor. A professional man worth his salt is not going to be inhibited by the fact that he was appointed by a Minister and, secondly, the Minister himself is not involved in the things which the auditor is going to audit. An auditor does not audit policy; he audits accounts.

Further than that, the present clause, as phrased, permits even the Director of Audit to be appointed. It was phrased so widely because at the moment the Director of Audit's establishment may be insufficient for him to carry out, or have carried out, these commercial audits. The Government has absolutely no objection to the Director of Audit being responsible, but it is a different type of audit from the Government Service audit; it is a commercial audit.

In the circumstances, we cannot see our way to agree with this Amendment for the reasons given.

Amendment that –

In the proposed section 2K the words “an auditor appointed by the Minister” be deleted and the words “the Director of Audit” substituted therefor –

put, and negatived.

Suspension of Standing Order

The Minister of Trade (Leader of the House) (Mr. Ramsaroop): May I, with respect, seek your leave to move the suspension of the Standing Order 9 (1) to enable consideration of this

Bill to be completed and to take the other item on the agenda, the Customs (Amendment) Bill, item 2.

Question put, and agreed to.

PUBLIC CORPORATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Consideration of the Bill in Committee Stage was resumed.

The Chairman: The hon. Member Mr. Sutton.

Mr. Sutton: With respect to the Amendment to section 2L (2) by the insertion of the words

“not later than nine months after each calendar year”

after the words “National Assembly”, I may say that the point has been made very strongly by the Prime Minister that these corporations will be run on business lines. The intention is not to allow them - as is not unusual in Government practice - not to be sensitive of time and not to be aware when accounts should be ready.

You can imagine, Mr. Chairman, the chaos that would take place in commercial enterprises, in the light of their liability for income tax, if they were allowed more than a year for the presentation of accounts. But very often we find accounts for Government establishments and for sections of the Government are not laid for two or three years.

Seeing that the intention is clearly stated that these corporations, in particular this corporation, should be organised and run on strictly business lines we think that, like a business

enterprise, the report should be made available to the Assembly not at any time but within a specific time after it has become available to the Minister.

The Prime Minister: Perhaps my hon. Friend will be pleased to learn that his Amendment is accepted.

Amendment that –

The words “not later than nine months after each calendar year” be inserted after the words “National Assembly” in the proposed section 2L

put, and carried.

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

Clause 3

Question proposed.

Mr. Jagan: Mr. Chairman, I am wondering whether the word “property” in the phrase “right, title, or interest in or over any property vested” would include cash or whether it is the intention of the Government that it should refer only to immovable property. Is it that only immovable property owned by the corporation will be vested in this new corporation or will all the assets of the other corporations be automatically vested? It is not quite clear that cash is to be included.

The Prime Minister: Assets held “for and on behalf of the State.” The hon. Member has no problem because as long as the assets are held on behalf of the State it is the State’s already. It does not refer to every property, but property real, personal, movable and irremovable held on

9.8.71

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

9.50 p.m. – 10.00 p.m.

behalf of the State. In other words, such property is the State's already. The State does not want to hold it. The State says "This is an agency for holding this type of property."

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

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

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, perhaps this may be a convenient stage to suspend the Sitting for 15 minutes.

Sitting suspended accordingly.

10.17 p.m.

On resumption –

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Sitting is resumed and we will go straight into Committee.

Assembly in Committee

The Chairman: The Schedule is a long one consisting of ten pages which makes provision for amending five Enactments. Amendments have been circulated and it is proposed to deal with them separately. We will now deal with the Amendment proposed in the first Enactment. We will be making reference to each Enactment and hon. Members will speak on any specific portion. We will now deal with the Amendments proposed to the Enactment of this Public Corporations Ordinance, pages 8 to 15.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, page 9, clause 3 states:

“The General Manager of the Corporation shall be the deputy chairman of the corporation.”

I should like to enquire from the hon. Prime Minister what happens to those bodies where there are no general managers.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Chairman, this particular Amendment refers only to corporations that are net up under section 34 of the Principal Ordinance and in the case of those corporations under the Ordinance itself you always have a General Manager. May I take this opportunity to move an Amendment?

The Chairman: Just a minute hon. Prime Minister. I think the hon. Member Mr. Jagan proposes to move an Amendment on page 14.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Chairman, I or not objecting to your ruling but my Amendment would come on page 8.

The Chairman: Page 8?

The Prime Minister: Oh, I am sorrysir.

Mr. Jagan: Before we go to my Amendment, page 13, section 46, there is a proposed Amendment to subsection (1) that the word “President” shall be substituted for the words “Council of Ministers”. In subsection (2) there is also the words “Council of Ministers”. I wonder whether there should be an amendment also to substitute “President” for “Council of Ministers” in subsection (2).

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. What is proposed is that the word “Minister” be substituted in subsection (2) for “Council of Ministers”.

The Chairman: Just above section 46 under the left hand corner.

Mr. Jagan: The Amendment I propose is to delete the word “direct” from this subsection (3) as proposed. My view is that by having the word “direct” it will be very restrictive as to a person who may have claims as a result of loss or injury. If a person dies as a result of injury, his widow and children will not have a claim resulting from death. I am rather surprised to see the word “direct” here. I realise that it is in the 1962 Ordinance also. But I do not know it missed the Prime Minister when he was in the Opposition. I think the Government should agree to delete this word “direct” because it may create hardships to say to a person that his loss or injury must be direct as a result of the loss or injury. I also wonder why it reads:

“Any person who suffers direct injury or loss, owing to the operation of an Order of the President under this section...”

Would it be the Order of the President? Or really an Order of the Board or Corporation?

10.25 p.m.

Your Honour, I think my learned and hon. Friend the Prime Minister, with his ability in interpretation, is quite aware of the restrictive meaning that the word “direct” would involve and I do not think I will belabor it.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Speaker, when my learned and hon. Friend spoke to me before, I agreed with him, but after consultation with the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and my attention being attracted to the fact that section 46 deals with an emergency, I thought that the Government could not accept that Amendment, because one does not want to have these possibly remote injuries and losses being ascribed to the Order made by the President. If my hon. and learned friend suggests that the doctrine of remoteness of damage will apply here, I do not see why he should want to change the word “direct”.

As he knows, this Government and I assume any successor would always be human and humane in using its discretion. Maybe it will deny liability, but still settle as it did in the case of Pauline Greaves. On the advice of our chief Parliamentary Counsel, I am afraid I cannot accept the Amendment. Though, let me say publicly, that privately and on my own I had agreed, but on better and more mature advice –

Amendment –

That the word “direct” in the proposed Amendment to section 46(3) of the Public Corporations Ordinance, 1962, be deleted,

put and negatived.

The Prime Minister: I move that the following Amendment be inserted after the proposed Amendments to section 46:

“Section 49 the words ‘or the deputy chairman or other member elected to preside at a meeting of the corporation’ shall be inserted after the word ‘chairman’.”

If one looks though the arrangement of this Ordinance, it does appear that the deputy chairman will not automatically be able to authenticate these Minutes for the purposes set out here and this Amendment is to remove all doubt that the deputy chairman or other presiding member can authenticate minutes for the purpose of there being *prima facie* evidence of the proceedings of the corporation.

Amendment put, and agreed to.

The Chairman: We will deal with pages 15 and 16 relating to the Guyana Credit Corporation; pages 16,17,18, and 19, relating to the Guyana Electricity Corporation; pages 19,

20, and 21, relating to the National Insurance and Social Security Act; and pages 21, 22, and 23, dealing with the Rice Marketing Ordinance. Hon. Prime Minister, please move the Amendment.

The Prime Minister: I beg to move that the word “General” appearing before the word “Manager” be deleted in the proposed clause 6 (1), and that in subclause (2) of the proposed clause 6, the words “an Assistant Manager, a Secretary and” be inserted immediately after the words “employ” and before the word “such”.

Amendment put, and agreed to.

The Prime Minister: I move that the word “whatever” be substituted for the word “whenever” in the proposed Amendment to section 15.

Amendment put, and agreed to.

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

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported with Amendments as amended, considered, read the Third time and passed.

CUSTOMS (AMENDMENT) BILL

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Customs Ordinance. [The Minister of Finance]

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Hoyte): In accordance with paragraph (2) of Article 80 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Customs (Amendment) Bill, 1971 for consideration by the National Assembly.

10.35 p.m.

Your Honour, from time to time, importers and other persons to whom goods have been consigned became entitled to refunds of customs duties which were paid on those goods. The repayment of such duty is authorised by section 51 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309. Section 51 authorises, upon proper certification by the Comptroller of Customs and Excise, the refund of such overpayments within two years after such overpayment has been made. It will be observed therefore that not only must the claim be made within two years, but the refund must also be effectuated within that two-year limit.

For some time the Comptroller of Customs and Excise has been interpreting the section differently and has, in fact, been making refund to applicants outside of the year-year limit where such application for refund has been made within the two-year limit.

This practice has recently been challenged by the Director of Audit who did not agree with the interpretation put in that section by the Comptroller of Customs and Excise; and upon a reference to the Solicitor-General, the Solicitor-General, in his opinion, agreed with the interpretation of the Director of Audit. So it does appear that moneys have been refunded to importers and cosigners of goods in breach of section 51 of the Customs Ordinance.

It is not the intention of the Government to deprive persons who are entitled to refunds of such moneys which are due to them. This amendment, therefore, seeks to do two things. First of all, it seeks to regularize the refunds which have been made in breach of section 51 and,

secondly, to enable the Comptroller of Customs to make refunds which are properly claimed at any time after a proper application has been made.

Of necessity, it is important that applications for refunds be madeso as to prevent claims being made at any time and very long after the overpayment has been made. Under the scheme of the amendment, applications for repayment must be made within six months after the date such overpayment has been made; but once the application has been made within the statutory time limit the Comptroller is empowered to make those refunds at any time.

This amendment seeks to give the Comptroller such powers and to permit him to make refunds of overpayment to people where the refunds are lawfully due. I commend this Bill to the honourable House and ask that it be read a Second time.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran.

Mr. Ram Karran: This is a very small matter but I thought the hon. Minister would have indicated the number of transactions we are going to regularise, namely, those which the Comptroller of Customs and Excise has paid without authority. I thought, too, that he would have given some reasonable explanation for the decision of the Government to reduce the period for making claims from two years to six months.

It seems to me, having some little knowledge of this type of transaction, that six months is too short a period. Having regard to the number of letters that have to be written to one's Principals and sent back and forth, six months is not long enough.

If the law originally allowed for two years there must be some very good reason for the Government to reduce the period inasmuch as it states it does not wish to deprive the public of

money which has been overpaid. I would have thought that this was an essential ingredient for the Minister to deal with. I hope that he is not going to get up and refer to the ignorance of Members on this side of the House. His practice is to say as little as possible on the measures and when Members rise and query things the usual thing happens.

I hope the hon. Minister will give us some very good reason, failing which the Opposition will be bound to oppose the reduction of the period for making applications from two years to six months.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Hoyte: Mr. Speaker, I would not answer the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran in the tenor in which he has made his intervention. I confine myself to the two questions which he raised.

The first query related to the number of refunds which the Comptroller of Customs and Excise made in breach of section 51, which actions this Bill now seeks to validate. I am unable to say how many repayments were made in this way. I am given to understand that this practice has been carried on for a long time, so I would imagine that the number of repayments must be substantial. It is not the sort of minutiae with which I as Minister will concern myself. I am concerned with the principle and I am satisfied that it is necessary that those acts on the part of the Comptroller of Customs and Excise should be validated.

The second point made by the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran related to the reduction of the period within which an application could be made for a refund to six months. It is to be noted that under section 51, as it now exists, there was a blanket period of two years within which application could be made and within which the Comptroller had to make the repayment. This is unsatisfactory because it was considered that two years is too long a time for a person to suddenly pop up and say, "I made an overpayment two years go."

As I said when commending the Second Reading of the Bill to the House, applications for refunds must be made timeously and it was considered after very careful consultations, that the period of six months was an adequate period within which an importer would know whether he had overpaid customs duties.

I do not think that one need to pay much attention to the protestations of the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran because it is noteworthy that the Chamber of Commerce, which has now constituted itself the watch-dog for the nation, which is so very active in making protests, representations, recommendations on all manner of things and which is every day putting out a Press Release, has said not a single word and has made not a single representation in connection with the Customs (Amendment) Bill, 1971.

10.45 p.m.

Therefore, I think that the conclusion is inescapable that the Bill meets with the approval of that august body.

Bill read a second time.

Assembly in Committee.

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

Clause 2

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: I wish to ask the hon. Minister of Finance to agree that the time limit for making claims to customs be extended to twelve months. I will give him one reason. All the goods coming from various parts of the world to this country, the persons importing those goods are unable to present a certificate of origin of the goods and this happens

very regularly. It is compulsory for those persons to pay higher duty if the certificate of origin is not produced. For instance, if the goods came from India you had to write to India – and I know this from personal experience – they take a long time before they send the certificate of origin. Six months lapse and you will be unable to place a claim for a refund.

I think this is a reasonable request to extend that period to twelve months so that the people will be given a fair opportunity to apply to the Comptroller of Customs to get refunds this year. I urge the Minister to agree to this Amendment.

Amendment proposed.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, I do not see what the Government will lose if it extends the time to twelve months. I want to point out that it is generally the small importers who will not be able to place their claims to the Comptroller within six months. This Government is so concerned about the small man and this Amendment will put the small importers to the greatest disadvantage. I want to believe that the Minister will agree, in keeping with this policy of making the small man a real man, to extend this time from six months to twelve months.

Mr. Ram Karran: I wish to join in the appeal to the hon. Minister and to observe that he did say in his reply that the Chamber of Commerce didn't condemn this issue. Certainly he does not know that the Chamber of Commerce does not represent every section of the importing community. The Comptroller of Customs will be speaking for the concerns that are properly organised. I refer to their accountants and customs staff and officers and so on. The small man referred to by my hon. Friend Mr. Wilson who are still alive in spite of Government are continuing to import in small quantities and they do not have all the organisation of the big concerns and they are the ones who generally have to make missions running to the Ministry of Finance to have refunds.

I know of one case in which two years was not enough for him to get the evidence to present and to satisfy the Comptroller of Customs that he had overpaid. I refer to countries like the Middle East, not now when war conditions prevail but generally correspondence to countries in the Middle East is very difficult to come by. In fact, sometimes it is written in French, sometimes it is written in English, and sometimes you get no correspondence at all. In many cases the officers here insist on authentic English transactions or original English. All these things require time.

My friend the hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud has referred to India and the Far East which also create a great deal of difference. This, to my mind, is the most reasonable of requests made by the Opposition notwithstanding the fact that the Chamber of Commerce has slipped it. My main argument is if originally with all the comptrollers of customs and all the Governments that preceded had allowed the people two years. They must have seen some justification for that – for the sending in of the application and for the application to be dealt with. How is it that this Government has decided to cut it down by six months? I am sure that my friend the hon. Member Mr. Sutton is knowledgeable about these things I do not know if his experience takes him in the Far East and Middle East. But I am sure that there is justification for this appeal.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether I could ask my hon. Friends Mr. Ram Karran and Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud if they do not get the authentication within the six month period but got it after as well as a refund of duty, will they refund to the purchasers of the goods the extra duty that they had put on them after the mark-up. *[Laughter]* If they can assure us, Government may be able to consider it. I used to be a Customs Officer. When they get a refund they do not pass it back to the purchaser.

Mr. Hoyte: Your Honour, I said I am not persuaded. Bills are published so that persons affected or likely to be affected by the proposed legislation may have an opportunity to make representations or recommendations or suggestions. There has not been a single representation from any organised body or from any individual. I cannot accept that the voice of the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran, coupled with the voice of the hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, is the authentic voice of the small importer for whom they have shown such great solicitation and solicitude.

May I add that wherever there is a case of genuine hardship, there is a residual power in the Minister of Finance to grant a remission of duty and, in those cases, I can assure the honourable House that such representation will be given the most anxious and sympathetic consideration. I cannot, Sir, accept the Amendment.

The Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, do you wish to reply?

Mr. R.D. Persaud: Your Honour, the hon. Minister cannot be persuaded even by the comments of the hon. Prime Minister.

Amendment

That the word "twelve" be substituted for the word "six" in the proposed section 51 of the Principal Ordinance.

Put, and negative.

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

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

Assembly resumed.

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

ADJOURNMENT

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

Adjourned accordingly at 11 p.m.

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