

T H E
P A R L I A M E N T A R Y D E B A T E S
O F F I C I A L R E P O R T

[VOLUME 7]

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FOURTH SESSIONS OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE SECOND PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE
CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA**

26th Sitting

2 p.m.

Monday, 1st November, 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)

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

(Absent – on leave)

The Hon. B. Ramsaroop,
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction (Leader of the House)

The Hon. D.A. Singh,
Minister of Trade

(Absent)

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

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

The Hon. W. Haynes,
Minister of State for Co-operatives and
Community Development

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)

The Hon. E. B. McDavid,
Minister of Information and Culture

The Hon. Miss C.L. Baird,
Minister of Education

Parliamentary Secretaries

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

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

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

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

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

Other Members

Mr. J.N. Aaron
Cde. 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. Jordan
Mr. S.M. Safee
Cde. R.C. Van Sluytman
Cde. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.,
Cde. L.E. Willems

Members of the Opposition

People's Progressive Party

Dr. C. Jagan, Leader of the Opposition
Mr. Ram Karran,
Mr. R. Chandisingh
Dr. F.H.W. Ramsahoye, S.C. (Absent)
Mr. D.C. Jagan, J.P., Deputy Speaker
Mr. E.M.G. Wilson
Mr. A.H. Hamid, J.P., Opposition Whip
Mr. G.H. Lall, J.P.
Mr. M.Y. Ally
Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, J.P.,
Mr. E.M. Stoby, J.P.

Mr. R. Ally
Mr. E. L. Ambrose
Mrs. L. M. Branco
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mr. Bhola Persaud
Mr. I.R. Remington, J.P.
Mr. V. Teekah

(Absent)

United Force

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

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

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS

The following Papers were laid:

- (1) (a) Public Corporations (Guyana School of Agriculture) (Cessation) Order, 1971 (no. 67), made under section 2c (3) of the Public Corporations Ordinance, 1962 (No. 23), on the 13th of October, 1971, and published in the Gazette on the 16th of October, 1971.
- (b) Report of the Chief Co-operatives Officer for the year 1969.
- (c) The Grenada Declaration, 1971. [**The Prime Minister**]
- (2) Annual Report of the Guyana Rice Marketing Board for the period 1st October, 1969 to 30th September, 1970. [**The Minister of Finance on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture**]
- (3) Annual Report of the Guyana Telecommunication Corporation for the year 1970. [**The Minister of Communications**]
- (4) (a) Statement of Guarantees given by the Minister of Finance under section 3 of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporations and Companies) Act, 1971 (No. 16), for the quarter ended 30th September, 1971.
- (b) Ministers, Members of the National Assembly and Special Offices (Allowances) Order, 1971 (No. 65), made under section 8 of the Ministers, Members of the House of Assembly and Special Offices

(Emoluments) Ordinance, 1965, and published in the Gazette on the 16th of October, 1971. [**The Minister of Finance**]

- (5) (a) Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security for the year 1970.
- (b) National Insurance and Social Security (Mariners and Share Fishermen) Regulations, 1971 (No. 16), made under sections 47 and 51 of the National Insurance and Social Security Act, 1969 (No. 15), on the 14th of September, 1971, and published in the Gazette on the 18th of September, 1971.
- (c) National Insurance and Social Security (Benefit) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations, 1971 (No. 17), made under section 51 of the National Insurance and section 51 of the National Insurance and Social Security Act, 1969 (No. 15), on the 14th of September, 1971, and published in the Gazette on the 18th of September, 1971.
- (d) National Insurance and Social Security (Industrial Benefit) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations, 1971 (No. 18), made under section 51 of the National Insurance and Social Security Act, 1969 (No. 15), on the 14th of September, 1971, and published in the Gazette on the 18th of September, 1971. [**The Minister of Labour and Social Security**]

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

THE GRENADA DECLARATION, 1971

The Prime Minister (Mr. Burnham): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to decisions taken at a Special Conference of Commonwealth Caribbean Heads of Government held at Grand Anse, Grenada, on July 25, 1971, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Caribbean Regional Secretariat has today published throughout the Region the Grenada Declaration signed by me on behalf of Guyana and by the Premiers of the Associated States of Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts/Nevis/Anguilla, St. Lucia and St. Vincent. Copies of the Declaration have been tabled in this House and I invite the attention of all Honourable Members to its text and to its significance.

I do not propose in this statement to recite its terms. Honourable Members will recognise that it represents a commitment by the participating Governments to seek to achieve a new political unity in the English-speaking Caribbean on the basis of procedures that have been clearly set out. As such, the Declaration represents the first practical step toward political unity taken since the dissolution of the Federation of the West Indies in 1962. I should like to emphasise that although at present it encompasses only six territories of the Region it looks to the creation of a West Indian nation that will ultimately comprise all the peoples of the West Indies.

2.25 p.m.

I wish to assure honourable Members and, beyond this House, to assure all our citizens and indeed all the people of the Region that a spirit of fraternity not a spirit of divisiveness pervades the Declaration and will, so far as it is within our power, condition all action that is taken under it. As an indication of this I should like to make it clear that the development of political unity under the Grenada Declaration is in aid of the integration programme, not in derogation from it –

that it seeks not to disrupt programmes of co-operation already initiated but to advance them more effectively to the benefit of all Member States.

The Declaration itself recites in its preambular paragraphs that its signatories were mindful of the lessons of past efforts in the cause of West Indian unity. It is important in this context to recognise that the procedures established under the Declaration reject constitution-making behind closed doors and provide for wide public consultation and national and regional involvement.

So far as Guyana is concerned we go into this exercise without pre-conditions of any kind. We regard ourselves as involved in a search for new constitutional forms through which our declared goals of political unity can be attained – bearing especially in mind the objectives of creating with our partners of today and those other Caribbean States for whom we must cater, a workable West Indian Nation. In that search, we must not be afraid to explore new constitutional pathways; it may be that neither Federalism nor Unitary Statehood can take us to our constitutional goals. With the constitutional experience of the past to guide us away from areas of failure and of disappointment we must be imaginative and creative. Above all, we must ensure that what we produce has a West Indian character and meets West Indian needs. Toward the attainment of these ends, Guyana shall seek not to lead but to contribute to the common endeavour.

Ultimately, since decisions must be taken on the basis of unanimity in the Constituent Assembly, a regional consensus will be an essential pre-requisite to political unity – just as the ultimate approval of the Parliament of every State will be a pre-condition to the constitutional changes that will bring it about.

On the strictly domestic front here in Guyana, it will be the aim of my Government to fully involve the Opposition in and out of Parliament and the public generally in the important processes of decision-making for which the Declaration makes provision.

My Government fully recognizes the right of every West Indian State to decide against participation in these present efforts towards political unity, but we recognise also that such decisions do not imply the withholding of goodwill and assistance any more than does the decision which we have made to proceed imply a wish to exclude others. We assume that such goodwill and such assistance will be forthcoming; and we welcome an instance of this contained in the statement made today by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. We wish to give the assurance that so far as we are concerned the door will always be open to our West Indian brothers who may not be with us now, to join us, in this great enterprise and within the West Indian Nation whenever they may feel ready to do so.

It is contemplated that an early meeting of Heads of Government of the participating territories will be held within the next few days to take the decisions necessary to the launching of the programmes of action set out in the Declaration. The House and the Nation will be kept fully informed of all these developments. *[Applause]*

**REQUESTS FOR LEAVE TO MOVE THE
ADJOURNMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY**

**DISMISSAL NOTICES – EMPLOYEES
OF SANDBACH PARKER 7 CON. LTD.**

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. Jagan) : Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I beg your leave and the leave of this House to move the Adjournment of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, that is, the impending dismissals of over 250 workers of Sandbach Parker & Co. Ltd., of the Demerara Group of Companies.

Mr. Speaker: I am satisfied that the matter is definite, urgent and of public importance, and can be properly raised on the Motion for the Adjournment of the Assembly. I will now ask the Members of the Assembly if they so agree.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, at the proper time, you will be permitted to raise it.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTIONS

THE PUBLIC CORPORATIONS (GUYANA SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE) (CESSATION) ORDER, 1971 (No. 67)

The Prime Minister: Under the Public Corporations (Amendment) Act 1971, which established the Guyana State Corporation, Guystac, there are over-all provisions for certain supervisory functions to be performed by Guystac, and another provision which is contained in section 2C paragraph (3) under which it is possible, if I may use the term, for Guystac to decontrol any corporation which came under its aegis by virtue of the Act.

The Motion before the House seeks to have, so to speak, decontrolled, the Guyana School of Agriculture. The Guyana School of Agriculture was, as is well known, established as a corporation under the Public Corporations Ordinance of 1962. But when one looks at the purpose behind the establishment of Guystac one recognises that that purpose is more specifically referable to seeing that proper business procedures are carried out, that there is proper budgeting, and that the corporations function effectively and in a business-like fashion.

At the same time, it will be remarked that the Guyana School of Agriculture is primarily an educational institution, a research institution, and not really a business that trades or sells anything. In fact, no fees are paid, and in the same way as another educational institution, the University of Guyana, was not brought under the control of Guystac, it was the view of the Government that the Guyana School of Agriculture should not come under Guystac.

In the circumstances, it is proposed that the Guyana School of Agriculture continue to remain entirely and solely under the control and be part of the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture. Maybe, at another time another Minister, perhaps the Minister of Education, may be charged since it is an educational institution. But as at present advised the Government feels that it belongs properly within the Ministry of Agriculture and as part of the responsibilities of the Minister of Agriculture. In the circumstances, I move the Motion standing in my name.

Question proposed.

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

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr. Speaker, like the hon. Prime Minister, we on this side of the House recognised a long time ago that the Guyana School of Agriculture was not a business, but, in fact, an educational institution. The Government of the day, which has become popular for not heeding advice though objective, displaying arrogance, refusing to lend an ear to considered proposals from the Opposition, has had to come so early after the passing of the Guyana State Corporation Bill to remove the Guyana School of Agriculture from the jurisdiction of Guystac and make it an independent body.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that when the Guyana State Corporation Bill was tabled I urged then from this side of the House that it was a wrong move. There was no vision; there was no foresight on the part of the Government to seek to put the Guyana School of Agriculture under Guystac. The Government as usual could not see the wisdom and so it did not heed the advice. We see here that shortly after, the Government has come now with provision under the Guyana State Corporation Ordinance to remove the Guyana School of Agriculture.

The Government has been ill-advised at this stage to come to the conclusion that it is not opportune for it to hand over control of the Guyana School of Agriculture to the Ministry of Education. I feel the time is long overdue; it is only a waste of time to have an amendment now

and then come back and say, "We now consider it opportune and right to put the Guyana School of Agriculture under the Ministry of Education." We feel now is the time.

There is need for great improvement at the Guyana School of Agriculture and those hon. Members of the House who are keeping a keen eye on this particular institution will be able to see and recognise the need for the changes. I remember urging on that occasion that the Guyana School of Agriculture keeps students there for a period of two years. They receive their Diploma and they are sent into the fields as Agricultural Field Assistants; and from reports from the various farming communities one discovers that these officers after two years are still inexperienced and very much so to give advice to farmers. It is my view that the Guyana School of Agriculture should be expanded whereby greater teaching facilities should be provided to the students. When they complete their first two years and they receive their Diplomas we feel that there must be accommodation in the institution for further studies to allow them to specialise in particular fields. For instance, one student himself told me, "I want to specialise in animal husbandry"; another would say, "I want to specialise in crops". After another period of a year or so these students would be better students and would be able to serve agricultural community more effectively.

This needed expansion cannot wait any longer, because while the government takes months and years to make decisions on important aspects of the country's economy we see deterioration all around. There is no need for a pair of glasses to see a decline in agriculture in the country; and if the Government continues postulations these things will remain slogans. We want to see these mouthings of the Government become realities. This is the position of the Government that all its mouthings and slogans have failed to reach even the hearts of its own supporters. If hon. Members of the Government were to come out of their - - - they will get the feedback. They are the people who should decide on changes we should have, they are the people who should decide whether we should have a military state or what have you, not people sitting in high places who are out of tune with the aspiration of the masses and showing absolutely no concern. The time has come when the people of this country, particularly the

young people should speak out on matters of this type. No matter what you know once you speak in the country and once you express your views as dictated by your conscience you are open to discrimination and what have you.

To my mind this matter is one of great urgency; it is one that deserves the deepest consideration. I would wish to urge the hon. Prime Minister in my contribution to give deeper consideration to this particular Order before the House with a view to arranging as early as possible the transfer of control of the Guyana School of Agriculture to the Ministry of Education.

2.45 p.m.

Further, the necessary legislation should be drafted for the Guyana School Agriculture to be controlled and managed by the University of Guyana.

It is the view of the Opposition that the University of Guyana is the proper body to manage the Guyana School of Agriculture and this can come about if we start the first move by handing the school to the Ministry of Education. Moreover, the Guyana School of Agriculture has limited facilities which can form a nucleus for a Faculty of Agriculture, something which is needed in this country if we are to achieve the motto of feeding ourselves. This can be achieved if the Government stops hiding behind slogans and brings about a reality of making positive changes in order to achieve our agricultural goal.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, do you wish to reply?

The Prime Minister (replying): Mr. Speaker, I have heard my hon. Friend. It does not require an Order to transfer the Guyana School of Agriculture from one Ministry to another. To the Government's present mind, it is not necessary to transfer it to the University of Guyana. I hope that the Motion will be passed.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion affirmed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, as the business of the House is now finished, perhaps it is the wish of the House that we take the Motion on the Adjournment moved by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion affirmed.

DISMISSAL NOTICES – EMPLOYEES OF MESSRS

SANDBACH PARKER AND CO. LTD

Dr. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, we have read with a great deal of concern about the impending closure of six departments of Sandbach Parker and Company Ltd., which belongs to the Demerara Group of Companies. It is estimated that over 250 workers will be dismissed and thrown in the streets. Something seems very strange and funny in this whole operation. Not too long ago, I think it was July or August of this year, the union which bargains for the employees in this enterprise signed an agreement retroactive to January of this year, and with a life extending to December, 1973. We understand, also that in this agreement, provision is made for ninety days notice to the workers in the event of termination or amendment of the agreement.

In what appears to be a rather strange incident, although, as disclosed in the press, the company has decided to close down after consultation with the Government, no intimation was given to the workers or to the union despite the agreement signed, and like a bolt from the blue, they were suddenly told that these workers will be dismissed. We are at a loss to understand this

kind of behavior. Perhaps we should not be, because it would seem that Oliver Jessel and company belong to the new breed of robber barons, who do not seem to care either about agreements or about the welfare of the working class. How is it, all of a sudden, when only a few months ago an agreement was signed, the company has decided to shut down six departments?

We were told that this company, Sandbach Parker, had an encouraging record and was doing, in fact, better than a corresponding firm operating in Trinidad. How then, sir, that all of a sudden this company has decided to shut down? We are not in a position to know exactly whether the company has closed down because it is losing money. If about a year ago this company had an encouraging record and the business of this company has expanded by about \$3 million, one would assume that it was making profits. If it was making profits, the question which arises is: what is the scale of profits? Perhaps the scale of profits which may be considered reasonable by other undertakings is regarded as unreasonable by Jessel and Company. We do not know. One can only speculate on the actions of these financial wizards, who seem to get rich quickly by utilizing other people's money in their financial gimmicks, such as, unit trusts, with their high interest rates that they have to recoup by making high profits made at the expense of the working class.

2.55 p.m.

Last year when Jessel took over we saw that over 200 sugar workers were retrenched; at that time, unfortunately, nothing was done about it. It seems that either the trade union movement is impotent or that some of their affiliates – the affiliates of the T. U. C. – are so closely connected with the company that they dare not take strong action when these ruthless capitalists willy-nilly throw out workers in the streets in order to make fat profits at their expense. Since we do not have the figures of the profitability or loss of the company we would like to have the Government tell us what is the position.

The Company says that it was in consultation with the Government over six months ago. If this is so then surely the Government should have enquired why is it they are closing down – what was the profit or the loss of the whole enterprise or sections of that enterprise. Did the Government threaten this company with some strong action? Or is it that the Government only threatens those who are powerless? There is a great deal of missing links with this very situation. We want to know from the Government categorically what these consultations were. What are the investigations? The Prime Minister has said there were no consultations. Does it follow that Jessel is lying? If the Government has not been consulted and Jessel and Company are fooling the public then we would like to know what has the Government done since Jessel has intimated that he will throw the workers on the streets. Has the Government undertaken any surveys to ascertain whether or not this company or its branches which are to be closed down are losing money or making profits? If the latter, what is the extent of the profitability? Unless we have these figures and facts we cannot know exactly whether the retrenchment had any justification, whether any action should be forthcoming either by the trade union movement or the working class as a whole in co-operation with the Government.

This leads also to the next point, and that is, are we, in this country, going to allow these sharks to close down what may be marginal operations and continue to run enterprises like sugar estates, like Diamond Liquors, where fabulous profits are made? Is this the way this country will be run in the future? Are we going to resort to the kind of nationalisation that we have seen in some countries like the United Kingdom where unprofitable, or the least profitable industries are taken over by the Government and those highly profitable ones are left to the capitalist class?

These questions are germane to an understanding of how the Government intends to tackle these vexed questions of the rising rate of unemployment. Already in our cities one-third of the youths are unemployed, another one-third underemployed. Jessel and Company have thrown out workers in the sugar estates before and now are adding to the list of unemployed by throwing out another set in Georgetown. Soon we will hear that because of their experiments in mechanization and so forth which have been permitted by the Ministry of Labour and the

Government that they have to retrench other workers, that unless they employ advanced, technology, they will not be able to compete and will go under.

I think the time has come when the Government must take a stand on these issues. It must tell the nation and the workers what it proposes to do to solve the grave unemployment crisis which today has so much untoward effects – crime, prostitution, the sentencing of people to life imprisonment for petty crimes. We do not know, we hope it is not true – whether there may be certain factors which prevent the Government from speaking out strongly on this occasion. It is rumoured that Sandbach Parker and Company has provided a lot of heavy equipment – draglines etc – to Greenland Co-operative Society. Perhaps we will be told if this rumor is true or not; for there are a lot of rackets and behind-the-scene activities going on in this country, as a result of which we find that the Government moves in very devious ways. The time has come when something tangible must be told to the nation. What does the Government propose to do positively on this whole question of unemployment and specifically about the throwing out of nearly 300 workers in the streets at this very crucial time in the history of our country?

3.05 p.m.

Mr. Lall: Your Honour, sir, the workers of Guyana are calling for help. The workers' children of Guyana are calling on all concerned to save them from starvation. We, from the Opposition Benches, are calling on Government to save Guyanese workers and their children. We, from the Opposition Benches, are calling on all Guyanese to boycott the sales that are presently going on at Sandbach Parker's. We, from the Opposition, are calling on the Government to protect not only the working class of Guyana, but also the workers of Sandbach Parker and Company Ltd., against a slanderous statement made by a certain newspaper that mass pilfering is going on at Sandbach Parker's.

It is stated in the newspaper, that 300 workers are to be retrenched. It is obvious that 300 workers cannot be engaged in pilfering. I am demanding of the Government that an investigation

be carried out into this slanderous statement on Guyanese. Not only the workers of Sandbach Parker, but the statement appearing in the press slandered the whole Guyanese working class, and something positive must be done to save the character of the small man whom the Government wants to make a real man.

I want to draw this to the attention of the Government and the Evening Post, that when Jessel first took over the Demerara Company, he gave retrenchment notices to over 300 Guyanese workers, but because of the militant stand of G. A. W. U., this amount was trimmed down by 2/3. What is the C. C. W. U. doing? Where are the giants of C. C. W. U? What are they doing to save 300 workers from unemployment? We do not want talking. We want deeds. Where is the great T. U. C. to which the Minister is always referring? What is the T. U. C. doing about the malconditions existing in Guyana today?

The workers of Sandbach Parker comprise one section that is going, but we hear of the C. D. C. rolling the heads of over 600 workers. What is the Government doing? What are the so-called trade unionists doing? What is my friend, the hon. Minister of Labour and Social Security, doing? We need co-operation, but co-operation is a two-way word. We found the formula for the Minister and he should be grateful to G.A.W.U. I am not going to disclose here the formula which is intended to protect the workers from an irresponsible trade union movement.

Does the C.C.W.U. still wish to protect the workers of Sandbach Parker from the wicked capitalist who cares about profits and not human beings? Jessel! Sometime ago when Sandbach Parker retrenched workers, Government let loose the dogs against them. I am asking the Government now to nationalise the Demerara Company.

We will soon be approaching the festive season. Three hundred workers will be out of employment. Let us put it to the minimum, let us say, each worker has four children.

The Government which always is saying that it wants to make the small man a real man is allowing the expatriate to treat Guyanese like dogs? Something has to be done, and quickly too. An example has to be set, a standard has to be set by the Government. If these people are running a business concern, and let us assume one section cannot pay, then the other section will surely substitute for the one section. But I want to tell the Government that its vision is blundered. This is a reaction of the External Trade Bureau, and maybe more capitalists who only think of maximum profit workers will end up the same way as obtains now at Sandbach Parker. Therefore, the Government has to take 50 per cent of the blame along with Jessel. [**Hon. Members** (Oppos.) “One hundred per cent.”] Only the other day we supported the Government in nationalising DEMBA and of course we will support the Government to nationalise “Uncle Jessel”. What is the relationship? Are we going to allow Guyanese to go at the wayside and let “Uncle Jessel” get away with murder? Your Honour, the Government of Guyana has a duty to the nation and we are looking forward to the Government playing its part without favour, fear or partiality. I thank you sir.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Wilson

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the eminent closing down of Sandbach Parker of certain enterprises and the throwing of over 250 workers out of employment so suddenly is to my mind indicative of a serious defect in the Government’s planning or shall we say lack of planning. We have had a lot of big talk drummed into our ears of the Guyanese taking over control of the economy of the country, Guyanese running enterprises, and in particular areas there has been a lot of beating of breasts with regard to the impressive slogans “Feed Yourself”, “Clothe Yourself”, “Finance Yourself”, and “There is also some employment through co-operatives”.

The Minister in his seat says nothing is wrong with that. Nothing is wrong with that if there is the necessary planning to take care of that. These slogans are only smoke-screens to divert the people from the true situation in Guyana indeed to throw the blame on them. This Government is only fooling the people.

It says to the people, "Look you have to do all these things yourself." When the P.N.C. wanted a lot of votes they made a lot of promises. [Mr. Clarke: "Like What?"] Like nobody will go to bed hungry and the like. But the Government did not tell the people that they will have to do these things themselves. But now it has failed, it is casting the blame in the laps of the people themselves. All right you have all these plans for people to feed themselves, did not the Government expect then that the capitalists were going to hit back and take steps to subvert or undermine the objectives and to bring it to disrepute in the eyes of people.

3.25 p.m.

The Government ought to be wise enough to expect such actions in the eyes of Jessel. Has the Government any machinery set up to take care of these moves, such as suddenly closing down six departments and putting so many workers out of work? "If you have such big mouths, you oppose so much, take this. If you say you can feed the people and clothe the people, I am closing down." I should like the Prime Minister to answer. What steps has his Government taken to take care of such a move on the part of Jessel and others who may act in similar way? I have heard of Guyana Timbers closing down. Is the machinery ready to accept all these people into co-operatives? I should like to hear.

The Government says it is socialist and socialist planning must be comprehensive; there must be no defects. What are the unions that support the Government doing? Have they been prepared to do these things? De Peana was a director all the time, now he is scuttling the ship, leaving the poor workers to drift. Are there other enterprises to absorb the workers? If this is not so, then Government has indeed failed the workers. This workers' Government is failing the workers.

I should like to make this suggestion very seriously, that the Government ought to consider the question of providing loans or unemployment allowances for unemployed people. The Government cannot be messing up the economy of the country and not be prepared to

provide people with unemployment benefits. I think the other day we heard the hon. Minister of Labour and Social Security stating that the trade unions must have machinery to make some provision for employing the people. How can the trade unions take care of unemployed people? They take care of employed people. They accept subscriptions. Those who are working must make substantial contributions to assist those who are unemployed. The Government stands indicted if, in the face of this crisis, it cannot come forward with a plan whereby these workers can be absorbed or, alternatively, unemployment benefits are given to them.

Mr. M.F. Singh: The United Force is most perturbed by the announcement of the proposed closure of the relevant departments of Sandbach Parker and Company Ltd., and the consequent loss of employment of hundreds of employees, the small men about whom the Government so often talks. The United Force is perturbed about the closure of business or the threat to close business. It seems to me that we have a real dilemma in the country today. No new money is coming into the country. No new industry has been started, and investors are scared. What are the people to do? How are the people to earn a livelihood? Every day children come away from school. What are they to do? What is the Government doing about this? Are they to join the bands of choke and rob that parade the streets today? Not only are there the children, but there are the parents out of work.

Surely, this needs a thorough investigation by the Government and everyone in Guyana because it is a very worrying state of affairs. It needs an examination by the Government of its policies, to find out why no new money is coming into the country, why no one wants to invest, why there is economic stagnation, why existing businesses are threatening to close down, why the cost of living is going up. It should find out why there is such an increase in crime, and why there is this general dissatisfaction among the people in the country at the present time.

The United Force feels that these are the direct results of partisan policies and mismanagement by the P.N.C. Government. The United Force calls on the Government to stop

the drift further downward into the mud and try and let us advance. The United Force calls on the Government to govern in the best interest of the people instead of the favoured few.

3.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the inference is clear from what the Government has put forward that the Government was involved in these negotiations. It was told of the threatened closure and one would want to know; the natural question arises: What alternative did Government suggest? The Government was aware from what the company said, but it kept it quiet. Could not the Government have talked with the Company about an alternative avenue of employment for these people? Did it suggest that instead of closing the workers could take over the industry? What did this Government really do?

The hon. Prime Minister said that an investor is entitled to fair profits. Is one to presume now that this Company in respect of these departments is not making reasonable profits? Then there is the very serious question one must ask: Is something radically wrong in the interim between the company negotiating a new agreement with the trade union for better benefits to the workers? Surely it was presumed that everything was okay at that time, that the Company was making profits. Now, suddenly, what has happened?

The Government was apparently aware of this. I say it is the obligation of the Government to do something for these people, these small men that it talks so much about. Let us know exactly what these proposals are. Indeed if there were not investigations in depth in this matter let us appoint a committee to go into it. Let us know exactly what took place and what is now proposed. But I want to ask an immediate question: what does the Government propose to do now in respect of these people? Or is it going to leave them to go home, their children without jobs and they without jobs. The Government is under obligation to do something now. I demand that the Government tells us now what it proposes to do in this situation.

Mr. Speaker: the hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: (replying): Mr. Speaker, the Government sincerely shares with the Opposition the expressed concern about the number of persons who will be out of work when the Demerara Group of Companies closes down six departments and retrenches most of the workers there employed.

I should like to say immediately, Mr. Speaker, that when one heads a Government one does not go jumping into the press seeking to answer every mis-statement and every prevarication, and the leader of the Opposition might have asked me whether it was true that Government was consulted six months ago.

Let me state it clearly and categorically that the first intimation to the Government of the Demerara Group of Companies proposal to close down six departments came to the Government when Mr. Ekeroyd who is the local executive head of the Company saw me on Wednesday, I repeat, the 13th October at 3.30 p.m. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand a letter from Mr. Ekeroyd dated 14th October thanking me for having seen him the day before and regretting that he could not, when he saw me, have brought glad tidings. I hope that no one will repeat the untruthful suggestion that the Government had any intimation of the Demerara Companies' closure of the departments six months ago.

Mr. Speaker, we have said that, we dismiss the question of six months notice. Secondly, I should like to say when Mr. Ekeroyd saw me on the afternoon of Wednesday, 13th October, (1) he intimated to me that the departments which were being closed had been making a loss over some years. I was not aware of that prior to his telling me, nor am I aware of it now. Obviously the Commissioner of the Inland Revenue will have to examine the returns that have been made over the years and other investigations will have to be carried out to ascertain whether it was a fact that the departments that are being closed were operating at a loss. (2) Mr. Ekeroyd informed me that those departments which were not being closed were departments that had been

making profits. If I remember correctly they are the Insurance Section, the Travel Agency, the Wharf, and the Shipping Agency.

When Mr. Ekeroyd gave me the information, all I did was to note the information. For I was, shortly before I saw Mr. Ekeroyd on that day, informed by the Minister of Labour and Social Security that a member of the Clerical and Commercial Workers' Union had told him that Sandbach Parker was closing down and he was going to see this person and other members of the Union. How the member of the Union knew, I do not know; it can hardly be in our place to know. This, I would say however, that the Minister of Labour has been in consultation with the Union Executive as to what steps may be taken.

3.45 p.m.

At the same time, the Deputy Prime Minister has also, since last week, been in consultation with the representatives of Sandbach Parker.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at the matter objectively. It has been said that Government ought to nationalise Sandbach Parker. What can the Government nationalise? The only thing that can be nationalised is the real property. The Government cannot nationalise its agencies. *[Interruption]* The Leader of the Opposition says: "Nationalise Demerara Company." But that is in contradistinction to his earlier remark that Governments like this are only interested in nationalising unprofitable sectors. I would like him to see the balance sheet of Demerara Company so far as its sugar operations are concerned and then ask him if he would agree that even for nothing we should take over the Demerara Company's sugar holdings. But some people speak out of an abundance of ignorance or an abundance of malice. *[Interruption]*

There has been talk about the nationalisation of Sandbach Parker. What can we nationalise? There is nothing that could possibly be nationalised except the real property that is there. The Government cannot nationalise the Holden agency, an expensive overrated car, which

I understand cent for cent is not as good as other cars in that bracket. The Government cannot nationalise the Kelvinator refrigerator which, I know, dollar for dollar is expensive as against other refrigerators. Therefore, it is a question of Government deciding on at least three things.

One is the proposal made by the union and its members that perhaps its members can be involved in a co-operative to continue running some of the business formerly run by Sandbach Parker through its six departments. But this is not something that can be decided overnight because one cannot set up a co-operative and say: run what Sandbach Parker has been running. Are we sure it is profitable? Even if they are to be organised in a co-operative – and I understand it is a subject matter of discussion between the union and the Ministry of Labour – one has got to identify a field where there are prospects of their earning.

The second thing that Government has got to decide is, if it were to take any steps to acquire by one means or another the real property which belongs at the moment to Sandbach Parker, a subsidiary of the Demerara Group of Companies, what use can be made of that real property, and thirdly, what can be done with respect to the persons who at the moment are under notice of dismissal.

I am informed in the first instance that these workers have been offered retrenchment pay. I do not know whether or not the union is satisfied that under the Agreement it has with the company, the retrenchment payments are satisfactory. The next thing is what can be done about these workers. There are three alternatives again. They can be absorbed into activities similar to those they have been pursuing in the past. May I say on this, that Mr. Ekeroyd had stated that some of them can be absorbed into other departments like the sugar holdings of the Company. The second alternative – and the first and the second are not mutually exclusive – is that the workers will have to be prepared to be retrained to serve in other capacities.

As I understand it, the majority of the workers to be retrenched are employed in the trading business as salesmen and saleswomen. Those who are employed in the mechanical

section, I understand, can be more easily absorbed. Those who are mere salesmen and saleswomen will have to accept retraining what with plans for building, and what with plans for the expansion of the agricultural sector. This is relevant. The Minister of Labour on the authority of the cabinet did make this offer to the union, and informed it that the Ministry of Labour and other Ministries of the Government stand ready to make arrangements for retraining in relevant fields and skills. However, there may be persons who are not prepared to be retrained.

It has been suggested that Government must do something. Yes, Government must do something. I heard the suggestion that Government should have stopped Jessel or Ekeroyd, or stopped the Demerara Group of Holdings from closing down. How can a Government stop anyone from closing a business and compel that person or group to run that business? A Government may, in the light of certain circumstances, have certain sanctions to apply if certain things are done, but a Government cannot tell a human being that he must continue to function in a particular way.

So far as Government is concerned, therefore,

- (a) It is in consultation with the union
- (b) It is considering the union's proposal and how Government may help: it has proposed retraining
- (c) It is making a careful investigation of the balance sheets and returns to ascertain whether or not there has been a loss
- (d) It is looking at the real property that is involved but the Government is not in a position and will be guilty of impropriety at this stage to say what it proposes or
- (e) It thinks it ought to do about the real property that belongs to the Demerara Group of Companies.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not here either to defend or necessarily to accuse. Perforce, I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that it seems passing strange that an agreement was signed in July with an expiry date of 1st July, 1973 and about three months after it is discovered that a tremendous loss is being made. That, to my mind, looking at it objectively, speaks of one of or both of two things. First, palpable dishonesty. If you knew in July that you were making a loss and a person like Jessel who is a financier as distinct from an entrepreneur does not stay in business if he is making a loss and he forecasts a continued loss. Or, Mr. Speaker, it was inefficiency in not recognizing that the management was bad. I have been told that it has been discovered that the management is bad. But this particular Company changed hands about two or three years ago and certainly there has been an opportunity to discover whether or not the management was good.

I have seen it suggested, in fact, the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall has suggested it, that they are closing down because of the External Trade Bureau. Actually, very few of the commodities traded in by Sandbach Parker are listed on the E.T.B. list. Therefore, even if that suggestion is made, it is without merit and without ground. [Mr. Lall: "They are the agency for other products."] as far as I understand they will be prepared to give up those agencies. What the Company is closing down is the trading section primarily. Says the hon. Member Mr. Wilson the Government ought to have anticipated that with the policy it is pursuing investors like Mr. Oliver Jessel would be prepared to put the screw on, so to speak, and exert pressure, indeed, this type of behavior in some quarters was anticipated and that is why there has been the greater emphasis on import substitution on a agriculture and on agro-industry. That is why, for instance, in the field of building there has been greater emphasis on the use of local materials; that is why, for instance, next year Government is launching a large forestry project to head which a trained and expert Guyanese is returning to Guyana.

In any case when one is carrying out the radical changes in the economy which are being carried out, instead of moaning about shopkeepers who close their shops, let us look to more productive employment for our people. Because these shopkeepers who in the past dominated

our economy, merely to use Mr. Ekeroyd's words, "have been importing other people's unemployment and other people's inflation." What I would have expected was to hear that the Government was not moving fast enough to find other avenues of employment which are productive and relevant. I have stated what have been the discussions between the Minister of Labour and the Union. I have stated the Government's intention.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister, do you propose to be much longer?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. I would crave your indulgence because the hon. Member Mr. Wilson and I have to attend a funeral at 4.30 o'clock. If you will give me just two minutes and the House accedes to my request I will wind up.

Mr. Speaker: You may proceed hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: The criticism should have been levelled, if at all, at whether or not Government had contemplated retraining and a provision of relevant and productive employment. The answer to that is, yes.

We hear the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh, Leader of the United Force – and I must deal with him at this stage because what with the freedom of the Press his remarks will be reported, and there must be a record of refutation. The hon. Member says that because of Government's policies no money is coming in. Well, I am hopeful for him as legal adviser to Guyroc that money will not stop coming in there. But, Mr. Speaker, how does an independent nation approach matters? Must we go crying, "Oh my God, because of policies no foreign investment is coming in?" Are we going to forever sit down like mendicants with our mouths open waiting for foreign investment? It does not really matter a tinker's cuss and a lot of you infants who are sitting down waiting you had better note the vote taken by United States of America Senate, you had better understand that a country like this cannot sit down and wait for foreign investment. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order, order.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Speaker, there are some fields in which there is interest shown, but Government's approach is not that it is going to develop Guyana on the basis of foreign investments. First, they are not sufficient, and secondly, in most cases they are not necessarily relevant. What does the hon. Member Mr. Singh want? Does he want us to beg people to come and set up more shops, to bring in more refrigerators, more records, and more motor-cars? Infants! This is a case of a combination of puerility and naiveté; it would take that approach. I understand, and I am not interested in whether it is believed or not, that so far as the principals of Sandbach Parker are concerned they are investing in oil palm. If they are interested in investing in oil palms – sure. That is a development of an indigenous industry, that is a development of an oil crop. But the Government is not begging anybody, I repeat, to come and set up any shop here.

4.05 p.m.

[Interruption by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.]

We have taken the Managing-Director; we will soon take the whole thing.

That is about all that Government can say about what is being done. We are still in consultation with the union and the owners and principals. I have set out the six matters that I consider relevant and I would further suggest that members of the Opposition, who, obviously, and I hope sincerely, are concerned, instead of shedding tears about the poor workers and the poor workers' children, come forward with proposals as to how we are going to re-employ these people not as salesmen and saleswomen but as skilled men and women.

Dr. Jaganrose ---

Mr. Speaker: Are you replying on a Motion for the Adjournment of the Assembly?

The Prime Minister: My friend cannot reply. Thank you, sir. [**Dr. Jagan:** “I will not be long. The Prime Minister is going to browbeat the House.”]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I am advised that you are not permitted to reply in matters of this kind. At this stage the discussion will be closed.

Hon. Leader of the House, will you please move the Adjournment of the Assembly.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Adjourned according at 4.07 p.m.
