

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 1]

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

28th Sitting

Tuesday, 20th December, 1966

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Present:

His Honour the Speaker, Mr. A. P. Alleyne

Members of the Government

Ministers

The Honourable L. F. S. Burnham, Q.C.	- <i>Prime Minister</i>
Dr. the Honourable P. A. Reid	- <i>Minister of Home Affairs</i>
The Honourable N. J. Bissember	- <i>Minister of Housing and Reconstruction (Leader of the House)</i>
The Honourable R. E. Cheeks	- <i>Minister of Local Government</i>
The Honourable E. F. Correia	- <i>Minister of Communications</i>
The Honourable Mrs. W. Gaskin	- <i>Minister of Education and Race Relations</i>
The Honourable L. John	- <i>Minister of Agriculture</i>
The Honourable R. J. Jordan	- <i>Minister of Forests, Lands and Mines</i>
The Honourable M. Kasim	- <i>Minister of Works and Hydraulics</i>
The Honourable W. O. R. Kendall, C.B.E.	- <i>Minister of Trade, Shipping and Civil Aviation</i>
The Honourable D. Mahraj	- <i>Minister of Health</i>
The Honourable C. A. Merriman	- <i>Minister of Labour</i>
The Honourable J. H. Thomas	- <i>Minister of Economic Development</i>

Parliamentary Secretaries

Mr. D. B. deGroot

Mr. G. Bowman

Mr. O. E. Clarke

Mr. P. Duncan

Mr. J. G. Joaquin, O.B.E., J.P.

Mr. C. V. Too-Chung

Other Members

Mr. W. A. Blair

Mr. J. Budhoo

Mr. W. G. Carrington

Mr. R. G. B. Field-Ridley

Mr. H. Prashad

- **Parliamentary Secretary,
Prime Minister's Office**

- **Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Labour**

- **Parliamentary Secretary
Ministry of Education
and Race Relations**

**Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Local
Government**

- **Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Works and
Hydraulics**

- **Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Finance**

Mr. T. A. Sancho

Mr. M. F. Singh

Mr. R. Tello, Deputy Speaker

Rev. A. B. Trotman

Mr. H. M. S. Wharton, J.P.

Members of the Opposition

Dr. C. B. Jagan, Leader of the Opposition

Mr. A. Chase

Mr. Ram Karran

Mr. R. Chandisingh

Dr. Charles Jacob, Jr.

Dr. F. H. W. Ramsahoye

Mr. M. Hamid, J.P.

Mr. J. R. S. Luck

Mr. H. Lall

Mr. M. Khan, J.P.

Mr. Y. Ally

Mr. L. Linde

Mr. R. D. Persaud

Mr. S. M. Saffee

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

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

Absent:

The Honourable P. S. d'Aguiar, Minister of Finance

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

Mr. B. H. Benn

Mr. H. J. M. Hubbard

Mr. C. V. Nunes

Mr. E. M. G. Wilson

Mr. D. C. Jagan

Mr. M. N. Poonai

Dr. S. A. Ramjohn

Mr. E. M. Stoby

Mr. M. Bhagwan - on leave

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Papers were laid:

- (i) List showing value of goods confirmed, afloat and at dockside prior to revocation of Import Licences on July 1, 1966.
- (ii) Supplementary Agreement under Article 31(3) of the Agreement for the Establishment of the Caribbean Free Trade Association signed at Dickenson Bay, Antigua, on 15th December, 1965. [The Minister of Trade, Shipping and Civil Aviation.]

- (b) what compensation will be paid to those who own lands through which the proposed deviation will run, and who are these landlords?
- (c) whether the existing road will be maintained after the deviation is completed?

The Minister of Works and Hydraulics (Mr. Kasim): (i) My Ministry is examining a proposal to construct at some future date a deviation of the Corentyne Road between Palmyra and Don Robin (before Gibraltar) but policy has not yet been determined. (ii) (a) The stage has not yet been reached for official consultation with the land owners and residents in the Palmyra/Don Robin area. (b) If it is decided to proceed with the deviation all claims for compensation will be investigated by a Compensation Claims Committee which will submit their recommendations to Government for approval. (c) No decision has yet been made as to whether or not the deviation will be constructed.

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

DEVIATION OF THE CORENTYNE ROAD

Mr. Ram Karran: I beg to ask Question No. 47 standing in my name on the Order Paper:

- (i) Will the Minister indicate what policy will apply with respect to the deviation of the Corentyne Road in the Palmyra-Gibraltar area?
- (ii) Will the Minister state -
 - (a) whether there has been any consultation with the landowners and residents in the Palmyra-Gibraltar area?

Mr. Ram Karran: As a supplementary question: Is there any policy with respect to compensation? Is every case for compensation dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis, or is there a standing committee which decides this question?

Mr. Kasim: Each case is dealt with on its own merits.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GUYANA PANDITS' - COUNCIL
(INCORPORATION) BILL

Rev. Trotman: Having given reconsideration to this Bill, and owing to certain representations which have been made, I beg that it be deferred.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill, by leave, deferred.

The following Bills were introduced and read the First time:

Post and Telegraph
(Adaptation And Modification)
Bill, 1966. [The Minister of
Communications.]

Tax (Amendment) Bill,
1966. [The Minister of
Housing and Reconstruction
on behalf of the Minister
of Finance.]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

EXTENSION OF THE NEW AMSTERDAM
ELECTRIC LIGHTING ORDER, 1900

The Minister of Trade, Shipping and Civil Aviation (Mr. Kendall): I beg to move that the New Amsterdam Electric Lighting Order, 1900, as amended and extended from time to time, be extended for a period of one year up to and including 31st December, 1967. Government hopes that

this will be the last time it will have to make this request, and I ask hon. Members to accept the Motion.

Mr. Lall: I have heard the hon. Minister of Trade, Shipping and Civil Aviation indicating to this House that this will be the last year he will move a Motion of this kind. I would like to remind him and this honourable House that the people in New Amsterdam are paying the highest electricity rates in the world, and something should be done to alleviate this situation. Year after year we are faced with the same situation in New Amsterdam, and there is room for expansion.

The hon. Minister of Trade, Shipping and Civil Aviation is a member of the Municipality, and he will agree with me that there is room for expansion of the power supplied to people around New Amsterdam, but nothing has been done by the Council to extend the service to certain people whereby more money could be placed in the coffers of the Council.

2.10 p.m.

I wanted to move an Amendment for a time to be specified, but I have changed my mind. I accept the word of the Minister, and I do hope that he will carry out his promise.

Mr. Ram Karran: Like most of the hon. Members in this Chamber, I am disappointed in the presentation of this Motion by the Minister of Trade, Shipping

and Civil Aviation. It is true that it is a hardy annual. Year after year, we come into this Assembly for an extension of the New Amsterdam Electric Lighting Order, 1900. I remember that in the latter part of the 1950s, some of the hon. Members sitting on the other side of the House were very critical of the past Government for the extension of this Order, and that was prior to the acquisition of the Demerara Electric Company, when the Government was not able to carry through its policy with regard to the rural electrification programme.

One would have thought that the hon. Minister of Trade, Shipping and Civil Aviation, who is a senior Member of the Assembly, a former Member of the Interim Government, a man of considerable experience which he acquired during the term of the last Government, ought to have been in a position to advise his colleagues, now that they are in the Government, how to avoid extending the New Amsterdam Electric Lighting Order, which has, I think, only two or three clauses.

I am disappointed because I thought that at this time the hon. Minister would have been in a position to tell us something about the extension of electricity in the ancient county, where he is a prominent citizen of the town of New Amsterdam. I think he objects to New Amsterdam being referred to as a town, as he was a Councillor there and a Mayor for a number of years.

I hope that the hon. Minister can find something to say in his reply and that he will give us an idea of what is happening in the ancient county, in New Amsterdam in particular, where people pay fantastic rates for electricity. I heard the hon. Minister, Mr. Bissember, mutter from his seat that electricity rates could be reduced if taxes were to go up. We have seen from the newspapers that electricity charges in the rural areas of Demerara are being reduced. I do not know whether it is a French or a Dutch reduction.

By selling the excess power in New Amsterdam -- [Interruption.] The hon. Minister (Mr. Kendall) tells us there is no excess power in New Amsterdam. There are units lying all over the place. There are two megawatt units lying at Ruimveldt. These units can be taken to New Amsterdam with little trouble. They can be put on a pontoon and taken right up. If the hon. Minister says that excess power is not available in New Amsterdam, then by selling more electricity to industry the cost of electricity to the consumer can be reduced. My friend, the hon. Minister of Home Affairs asked about the cost of transportation. That is very cheap.

One is inclined to say that the policy of the Government, in relation to electrification, is so ridiculous that the other day when a cable lying in the bed of the Demerara River was broken, it is alleged, by some vessel passing in the Demerara River it took the Government practically

[MR. RAM KARRAN]

six months to be able to restore electricity to the rural population on the West Coast, and people suffered tremendous losses.

The area in question had been recently supplied with electricity and people had bought radios and refrigerators, which are sensitive pieces of equipment. The result is that considerable recession has taken place. Moreover, the Corporation had the courage to send these people bills for electricity, and to inform them that they must pay for the period during which they obtained little or no electricity.

Some villages received electricity from nearby estates. Uitvlugt and Leonora supplied power, which they had in surplus quantity. One wonders why this kind of thing happens. Persons who were seriously affected said, "This Government does not like us. It is not making any effort to help." The hon. Minister will tell you that I telephoned him and made a suggestion - it is part of our business to help the Government - about the giving of electricity to the people who were losing by having to pay interest on hire purchase agreements and things of that nature. Nothing was done. Weeks afterwards I received a telephone call from Mr. Moriah of the Electricity Corporation. It shows the incompetence with which this Government operates in these matters.

Returning to the subject of electricity in New Amsterdam, I think it is a bit callous for people to pay 25 cents per kilowatt of electricity. [Interruption.] The hon. Minister corrects me; he says it is higher. Surely there could be an expansion to the rural areas. The members of the New Amsterdam Town Council are not interested. They do not care whether people outside the town receive electricity or not. What about the Marshall Plan? Let the people receive services for which they are willing to pay.

One would have thought that the rural electrification scheme, which was set well ahead of schedule when the last Government was in office, would have been pushed. The Minister of Trade, Shipping and Civil Aviation is one of the most competent Members on the other side, and he handles this subject of electricity. One would have thought that he would have extended it. I heard him say of the members of the Board, "I am going to bounce them all off, because they have no intelligence." Nominate good persons to the Board so that people will be able to obtain good service.

I have no doubt of the hon. Minister's ability, but he alone cannot run all these organizations. He cannot expect to get service and satisfaction if he is going to take directions from people like my friend across there, and if he is going to select hacks from the P.N.C., to put on Boards.

2.30 p.m.

The other day I was referring to members of the Rice Marketing Board. You will not get a satisfactory service anywhere unless there are people who are competent, sincere, and interested in the taxpayers of the country.

With all the generating equipment in Georgetown, and with the surplus generating capacity for units which are lying here, there and everywhere, it is time for the Government to put together these units and to be able to satisfy the needs of people from Georgetown all the way up to Port Mourant, or beyond Port Mourant.

I ask the Minister not to come back here next year with a smile and ask for the extension of the New Amsterdam Electric Lighting Order, but to come up with something constructive so that we on this side will be able to support the Government and all the people in the country areas can have electricity as quickly as possible.

Mr. Kendall (replying): This is a Motion for the extension of the New Amsterdam Electric Lighting Order, not to deal with the whole rural electrification scheme. I want to say that I agree in part with some of the suggestions made by my hon. Friends.

With respect to the extension of this Order, the Government is not pleased to make this request but our legal commitments in the Attorney-General's Office are very heavy. The Amendment which

has to be incorporated in the new Order has already been received from the New Amsterdam Town Council, and I can assure the hon. Member that when next we come here to deal with this, we will not ask for an extension of one year, maybe we will extend the franchise to ten years.

With respect to the extension of electricity in New Amsterdam, we are running at full capacity and the New Amsterdam Town Council has plans for putting in new units. I can assure the hon. Member that we are very willing to supply extra current to satisfy the needs of people in the country areas.

I thank the hon. Member for his observations with respect to surplus units available in Georgetown, and I can assure him that the whole Electricity Corporation is under review and the rural electrification scheme will also be reviewed very shortly.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

The Leader of the House (Mr. Bissember): I move that this House do now adjourn to 2 p.m. on Thursday, 22nd December, 1966, on which day it is proposed to deal with the Motion by the hon. Minister of Trade, Shipping and Civil Aviation in relation to the CARIFTA Agreement, copies of which have just been circulated to all hon. Members.

*Adjourned accordingly at
2.35 p.m.*