

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 4]

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

39th Sitting

2 p.m.

Thursday, 14th January, 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

(Absent – on leave)

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

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 Health

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

The Hon. D.A. Singh
Minister of Trade

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

(Absent)

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

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

Dr. The Hon. Sylvia Talbot,
Minister of Health

Parliamentary Secretaries

Mr. J. C. Joaquin, J. P.,
Parliamentary Secretaries, Ministry of Finance

Mr. F. Duncan, J. P.,
Parliamentary Secretaries, Ministry of Agriculture

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

Mr. Salim,
Parliamentary Secretaries, Ministry of Agriculture

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

Mr. C. E. Wright, J. P.
Parliamentary Secretaries, Ministry of Works, Hydraulic 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. L. I. Correia

Mr. M. Corrica

(Absent)

Mr. E. H. A. Fowler

Mr. J.R. Jordan

Mr. S. M. Saffee

Mr. R. C. Van Sluytman

Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen. J. P.

Mrs. L. E. Willems

Members of the Opposition

People's Progressive Party

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

(Absent)

Mr. Ram Karran

(Absent)

Mr. R. Chandisingh

(Absent)

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

(Absent)

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

(Absent)

Mr. E. M. G. Wilson

(Absent)

Me. A. M. Hamid, J. P., Opposition Whip

(Absent)

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

(Absent)

Mr. N. Y. Ally

(Absent)

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

(Absent)

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

(Absent)

Mr. R. Ally

(Absent)

Mr. E.L. Ambrose

(Absent)

Mrs. L.M. Branco

(Absent)

Mr. Balchand Persaud	(Absent – on leave)	
Mr. Bholu Persaud	(Absent)	0
Mr. I. R. Remington, J. P.	(Absent)	
Mrs. R. P. Sahoye	(Absent)	
Mr. V. Teekah	(Absent)	

United Force

Mr. M.F. Singh
Mrs. E. DaSilva
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.

ELECTION OF MEMBER TO PRESIDE AT THE SITTING

The Clerk: Hon. Members, as both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker are absent, it is necessary for the Assembly to elect a Member of the Assembly, not being a Minister or a Parliamentary Secretary, to provide at the Sitting.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Clerk, I should like to raise a point of order.

Article 63 (8) –

The Clerk: I am sorry. The meeting is not constituted and the point of order cannot be raised at this time.

Mr. M.F. Singh: I should like to raise a point of order in respect of our actual Assembly here, Mr. Clerk.

The Minister of Trade (Mr. Ramsaroop): Mr. Clerk, I respectfully beg to nominate the hon. Member Mr. Neville Bissember to take the Chair.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Hoyte) *seconded.*

The Clerk: Mr. Neville Bissember has been proposed by the hon. Minister of Trade and seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance. There being no other nominations I declare Mr. Neville Bissember duly elected to preside at the Sitting. *[Applause]*

[Mr. Bissember in the Chair.]

The Presiding Member (Mr. Bissember): Hon. Members, I declare this National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana to be duly constituted and in session. I shall ask the Clerk to be good enough to read prayers.

[Prayers]

The Clerk: Oaths!

Mr. M.F. Singh: I should like to raise a point of order.

The Presiding Member: Very well.

Mr. M.F. Singh: Article 63(8) of the Constitution provides that the functions conferred on the Speaker –

The Presiding Member: I just recall that the item is “Oaths” and that is what I would term one of the privileged items of the Agenda. I propose to have the Oath taken now and then maybe you can raise the point.

Mr. M.F. Singh: I should like to raise a point of order in respect of our very constitution here today. This is vital before you proceed with the business of the House.

The Presiding Member: Hon. Member, will you please take your seat while I am speaking. I think you should know, from your time in the House, that when the Speaker is standing you should take your seat. I have already ruled that the next item is “Oaths”, and I shall ask the Speaker, the Honourable Mr. Sase Narain, to enter. He will be brought in by the acting Prime Minister and the Leader of the House. Hon. Members, please stand.

[Mr. Sase Narain, Speaker, was escorted into the Chamber by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Trade (Leader of the House)]

[The Oath of Office was made and subscribed by the Speaker.]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair.]

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Dr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great joy and satisfaction to have this opportunity to offer you congratulations on behalf of the Government and on behalf of my party, the People's National Congress.

It is not usual that one gets such an opportunity, not being himself a leader of any party, but due to the absence of our worthy Prime Minister this singular opportunity has fallen on me and, as I said a while ago, it is a great joy. We are satisfied that you are not only fully qualified to be elevated to this high office, but that you have the capacity and ability to carry the office of Speaker with dignity and distinction in the Republic of Guyana. *[Applause]*

I want you to know, sir, that we on this side of the House will give you every support in this task of yours. We know that at times it is difficult, it is arduous, but we are also satisfied that you will be able to manage the affairs of this House without allowing unnecessary obstruction so that the business of Government will go on and the development of Guyana may proceed apace.

Once again, on behalf of the People's National Congress and the Government I offer you congratulations. *[Applause]*

Mr. M.F. Singh: Mr. Speaker, it really pains me to have to do this, but I should like to raise, first of all, a point of order which I was not allowed to do previously and which, in fact, should have been done at the very beginning, but I was not allowed to do it.

I should like to say that, in accordance with article 63 (8) of the Constitution and the Standing Orders, we are not, in fact, properly constituted here today because the meeting was not properly summoned. I support my arguments by quoting article 63 (8) of the Constitution which states:

“The functions conferred by this article on the Speaker shall, if there is no person holding the office of Speaker or if the Speaker is absent from Guyana or is otherwise unable to perform those functions, be performed by the Deputy Speaker.”

Mr. Speaker, in the absence of your being sworn in before the commencement of this sitting the person who was in fact the acting Speaker was Mr. Derek Jagan, a member of the Opposition. Mr. Jagan has drawn my attention to, and indeed I know of, Standing Order 8 (2) where it is provided that the Government should consult with the Speaker in respect of the giving of notice for a meeting and the Speaker “may give notice accordingly”.

2.25 p.m.

I would not bother to read the whole of it, but I will deal with what I think the Government is going to say. The Speaker may give notice of the meeting, not the Clerk to take instructions from the Government.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that if Parliament is to function properly, in the best parliamentary manner, the Clerk of the Assembly does not take instructions from the Government but he takes

instructions from the Speaker. On this occasion the man who was Speaker at the time, the hon. Member Mr. Derek Jagan, has informed me that no one consulted with him, no one told him anything, and he did not in fact give any instructions to the Clerk to call a meeting of Parliament today. I have a news release from the hon. Member Mr. Jagan to this effect.

Mr. Speaker, when we met on the last occasion a member of the Opposition was elected as Deputy Speaker which was made possible by the Government. I said that I was very hopeful for the future; and indeed I was very pleased. But what alarms me now is that, after having gone so far, the Government did not see fit to merely go through the courtesy of getting in touch with the Deputy Speaker, and arranging for this sitting of the House. The Constitution of Guyana specifically envisages that the Clerk should be removed from the executive; the Clerk should not be subject to executive direction. The Clerk of Parliament takes instructions from the Speaker. Therefore, the Clerk should have got instructions to summon the sitting today not from the Government, not from the Leader of the House, but from the Deputy Speaker, Mr. Derek Jagan, who should have been presiding here today.

It is true that Standing Order 8 (2) seems to give the impression that is only when a date has been fixed for Parliament to meet in the future that the Government must consult with the Speaker for an earlier date. But I say that this should be read in conjunction with Standing Order 8(1) where it is envisaged and provided that Parliament should sit from day to day, everyday, except Saturdays and Sundays. Therefore, this should read in the light of Standing Order 8(1) so that the Speaker is the one who gives the directions to the Clerk for the calling of a sitting of Parliament. If you are saying that the Standing Order here does not apply, well then surely in accordance with Standing Order 84(2), that applies:

“In cases of doubt the Standing Orders of the Assembly shall be interpreted in the light of the relevant usage and practice of the House of Commons ...”

The usage and practice of the House of Commons is that the Speaker, not the Government gives directions to the Clerk to call a sitting of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to say that it strikes at the very foundation of your position as Speaker. If there is disregard for this position, then the whole parliamentary system falls down. This may be a small matter but it is a very important one. If they are saying that you, as Speaker, are to be consulted only when a date for the future sitting of Parliament is fixed – it means that generally speaking the speaker will never at all be consulted, the Government would merely give the Clerk directions to call a sitting of Parliament which, as I said, strikes at the very foundation of your position. Your position as Speaker must be respected. And what alarms me is the fact that the Government having gone so far in having actually elected the hon. Member Mr. Derek Jagan as Deputy Speaker, it is not paying that position the courtesy it deserves.

I should like to submit to you that we are not properly constituted here today. The hon. Member Mr. Jagan, the Deputy Speaker, has told me that he has instructed the Clerk to this effect and that he had asked him to call a sitting as early as possible – not this meeting, because this was not called on his instructions – to have Your Honour elected as Speaker. [Dr. Reid: “That has already been done.”] – to have you sworn in as Speaker. A slip of the tongue is not the fault of the mind.

It really hurts me to know that on an occasion like this there should not be unanimity in the House, there should not be perfect accord in the House. Why is it that the members of the Opposition are absent today? Because of the simple matter of not having consulted with the hon. Member Mr. Derek Jagan on this occasion.

I should like to implore the Government – we have started a new era. With your Honour having been elected as Speaker and the hon. Member Mr. Derek Jagan as Deputy Speaker that there would have been consultation and a little more co-operation between the Opposition and the Government. I was really hopeful for the future. I am alarmed to see that on this occasion the Government did not see fit to continue what it has started when the hon. Member Mr. Jagan was elected as Deputy Speaker.

Your Honour, I am submitting to you that you see that another sitting is constituted here today, and that you should see that another meeting is called in accordance with the hon. Member Mr. Jagan's instructions for you to be properly sworn in.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture (Dr. Reid): I hope that as time goes on my hon. Friends will learn. I wish to read now Standing Order No. 4 paragraph (5). The question is: Who is Speaker? The hon. Member has made his first error when he said that we come here to elect a Speaker. We have already done this since the 4th of January, 1971. I read from Standing Order No. 4:

“(5) Wherever the unavoidable absence of the Speaker from any day's Sitting is announced by the Clerk at the Table, the Deputy Speaker shall take the Chair and shall be invested with all powers of the Speaker until the next Sitting of the Assembly or for twenty-four hours, whichever period is the shorter.”

2.35 p.m.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Hoyte): Your Honour, I am happy that my hon. and learned Friend has managed to get a brief this week from my hon. and learned friend Mr. Jagan. I hope it is a paid brief.

The arguments advanced by the hon. Member are utterly untenable. One has to study the Standing Orders in their entirety in order to understand the position which has arisen today. Rule (2) of Order 8 provides for a situation in which the House has been adjourned to a fixed date. In those circumstances, the House will automatically reconvene on that date unless, in the interim, an extraordinary situation has arisen. In that situation the Speaker is vested with the authority under Rule (2) to reconvene the Sitting of the House before the date which had been fixed. Alternatively, the Speaker, at the request of the Government, may do so.

The background to this Rule is to be found in the *Report of the British Guiana Independence Conference of 1965*. I quote from page 9 of that Report. Paragraph 24 states:

“The Conference identified the following points in their discussions as being of particular note:-

- (i) To supplement the provisions of Chapter VI of the Constitution, (Parliament), the British Guiana delegates undertook to propose for inclusion in Standing Orders a provision whereby the Speaker could, in certain circumstances, reconvene the National Assembly.”

As at that date, there was no power in the Speaker to summon of his own motion, this honourable House. The position in the Commons House of the Parliament of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is entirely different from the position here, because, in the House of Commons there is not the concept of an Adjournment to a date to be fixed. There is Adjournment from day to day, or to a fixed date but under the system there, there are Adjournments during recesses.

In the 19th Century, the House of Commons at the end of each Session used to resolve that the Speaker should have the authority, in the event of some extraordinary situation arising, to reconvene the House, so the Speaker did that by express Resolution of the House of Commons. Sometime later, it was thought that it would be good if this authority were included in the Standing Orders and this was done, so that the position in the House of Commons is that the Speaker has got this limited authority to reconvene the House of Commons.

We have adopted and adapted that provision, and rule (2) of Order 8 gives the Speaker of this honourable House that limited authority where the House has been adjourned to a fixed date where it is the desire of the Speaker or of the Government to have the House reconvened before the date which had been fixed.

Apart from that, there is no provision in these Standing Orders governing the matter, therefore, we fall back upon the rule correctly cited by my hon. and learned Friend, Standing

Order 84. It is significant that he did not consider it advisable to read that Order in its entirety, because the very last phrase of it is the phrase that puts him out of court, and which governs the situation here today. With your permission, sir, I shall read rule (1) of Standing Order 84:

“In any matter not herein provided for, resort shall be had to the usage and practice of the Commons House of Parliament of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which shall be followed as far as the same may be applicable to the Assembly, and not inconsistent with these Standing Orders nor with the practice of the Assembly.”

Before we go to what obtains in the House of Commons, we had to ask ourselves what is the practice of this honourable House. The Government is satisfied that this sitting has been called in accordance with the practice of this Honourable House. We have been further fortified in our opinion by the opinion of the Law Officers, and I submit that the point of order made by the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh is untenable and without substance or merit.

Mr. M.F. Singh: We have had a long dissertation about the power of the Speaker to call a sitting of Parliament. The fundamental thing is: Whom does the Clerk take instructions from in order to summon a sitting of Parliament? Does the Clerk take instructions from the Government or does the Clerk take instructions from the Speaker? On this occasion the Clerk took instructions from the Government. The Government is to inform the Speaker, and the Speaker is the one to instruct the Clerk.

The Constitution clearly provides in article 63 (8) that when there is no functioning Speaker, the Deputy Speaker operates as Speaker. On this occasion, the simple point I am making is that the Government should have informed the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Speaker would then instruct the Clerk to call a sitting of Parliament. This, I say, is very fundamental because the Parliament must be kept separate and apart from the executive. The executive must not be interfering in Parliament. The executive must not be interfering in Parliament. The executive must get together with the Speaker and the Speaker is the one who instructs the Clerk on these matters.

Mr. Hoyte: May I make two supplementary points. The first is, I would submit respectfully, that the hon. Member really cannot be heard to advance the point he is advancing here because by the very fact of his attendance at this meeting – as I understand him, he learned some time prior to the sitting of this House, and he was satisfied in his own mind that it was so, that this sitting was unconstitutional and illegal – prevents him from challenging the legality of this sitting. The principle is one which is incontrovertible. You cannot approbate and reprobate at the same time.

Secondly, maybe this is fine distinction but I submit it is a valid one, and I hope that my hon. Friend will follow. All that the Constitution says with respect to Your Honour's functioning, is this: that Your Honour, being a Member of this House, cannot take part in the proceedings of the House until Your Honour has taken the oath, but from the time a Speaker is elected, he is Speaker of the National Assembly. He is not precluded from discharging such administrative duties as are attached to his office as Speaker of this House. From the time he is elected, he is entitled to go into the Parliament Office and take his chair. He is entitled to do all the administrative things preliminary to the sitting of the House, but he is as a Member of this House, I refer, sir, to article 76 of the Constitution:

“No member of the National Assembly shall take part in the proceedings of the Assembly (other than proceedings necessary for the purpose of this article) until he has made and subscribed before the Assembly the oath of office ...”

We are talking about two different situations. I cannot understand why the hon. Member should place so much faith upon something, he says, that has been told him by the hon. Member Mr. Jagan, who, I assume, is quite competent to come here and to make the same points raised in this honourable House by my hon. and learned Friend.

I submit that the points we have already advanced on this side of the House have answered entirely the points raised by the hon. Member Mr. Feilden Singh. In any case, I would

submit that – and this would be a matter in Your Honour's peculiar knowledge – the Clerk, as the chief functionary of this House, must have attested to Your Honour that the practice in relation to the summoning of the House has been followed.

[Applause]

Mr. M.F. Singh: On the question of approbating and reprobating, let me explain –

2.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I find myself in the unique position of having to make a decision whether I am Speaker or otherwise. If I am not vested with that authority, then the hon. Member Mr. Singh could not have addressed me. It presupposes, therefore, that he has accepted that this sitting has been constitutionally called and therefore he took the opportunity of raising this point.

I am satisfied that the sitting has been properly called and the sitting is properly constituted and I now so rule. *[Applause]*

Mr. M.F. Singh: On the question of approbating and reprobating, let me say that I attempted to raise the point at the beginning. I object and therefore we cannot take any further part in the proceedings.

[At this stage the members of the United Force bowed to the Chair and left the Chamber.]

Mr. Ramsaroop: Mr. Speaker, it is good to move from darkness to light. I profusely apologise for the unseemly and indecent interruption in the last couple of minutes.

Your Honour, will you permit me to observe a few hallowed and sanctified traditions of this House? Firstly, as Leader of the House, may I extend to you personally and on behalf of this House my fulsome and sincere congratulations to you upon your election to the high and dignified office of Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Guyana.

Secondly, as propriety would permit, may I hasten to bid you a warm welcome to your new official environment and to pledge to you the support, the loyalty, the co-operation and confidence of this Assembly.

Your nomination to the speakership of this House has come as no surprise to those of us who know you. Your sterling qualities of character and intellect eminently qualify you for this important office. Forgive me a personal recollection that will illustrate a few of these qualities.

I recall in February of 1964 the solicitude and diligence you displayed when you pretend my own petition for admission into the local Bar to practice my profession. I observed then, as I have had occasion to observe subsequently, the meticulous care, the industry and the single-minded devotion to duty you evinced in preparing a simple document. Among your colleagues at the Bar you have earned – and I submit justifiably so – the respect and admiration of the local Bar for the competence and high sense of professionalism which have characterized your practice. Indeed, on one occasion I myself felt the inexorable might of your research much to the detriment of my client's purse.

As a social and religious leader your record is endless. Indeed, only the demented would deny this. The excellence of the contribution you have made to this aspect of our national life has already earned you a signal honour and I will not gild the lily by indulging in a sterile repetition of what is already universally acknowledged.

Your performance in the field of public administration is no less distinguished. As a member of the Public Service Commission you discharged your duty with a rare blend of

detachment and distinction. You bring to bear to your office, therefore, and to your duties a rich treasury of experiences at the administrative, legal and humanist levels, out of which one can glean the compelling qualities that must perforce form the unwritten code of ethics for the high office you occupy. Your coolness, your genial disposition, your sound judgment, your clinical objectivity, and, withal, your rare mental equipoise are qualities that will bring a new richness and dimension to the texture of the office of Speaker.

Like all previous Speakers, you will in time develop a style of your own, which style will bear the stamp of your intellect as well as your character. It is on this aspect of your speakership that I feel particularly strongly and you will forgive me this last observation. A former Prime Minister of England – I think it was Disraeli – when discussing the selection of a candidate for the speakership of the House of Commons observed before Queen Victoria that all he needs do is to hold the parliamentary scales even. This dictum may have been right for that time and in that political milieu but for Guyana, however, I feel that your role must be a positive one rather than a negative one, to promote co-operation rather than avoid confrontation.

The importance of your office is not gauged by its numerical list on the table of precedence, important as that is, but by the power and influence you can bring to bear to promote the best and most cherished values of this nation.

In your office, sir, reside the mores of this nation, our ceaseless dedication to the principles of self-reliance and egalitarianism and our relentless pursuit of national unity.

From my brief and cursory allusion to your outstanding intellectual and spiritual attributes it is a sequitur to observe that the success of your office is assured. May God continue to guide and inspire you as you preside over the increasingly momentous matters of this nation in this year of Consolidation, in this highest forum of this land. I thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Acting Prime Minister, hon. Leader of the House, hon. Ministers, Members of the National Assembly: While I am deeply conscious of the signal honour you have done me I cannot help but experience a deep feeling of humility. But please be assured that I am neither appalled nor disquieted by the task that lies ahead.

My appointment as Speaker of this National Assembly of Guyana, following an election, has re-awakened in me a feeling of the desperate need for unity in Guyana at all levels and for a high standard of co-operation of members of the House in the performance of their parliamentary duties.

I am a newcomer to Parliament and I approach my new duties with humility. Since a Speaker is the person through whom the unity of the House is reflected, it is of prime importance that the functions of the office are carried on in a manner that is absolutely fair and impartial. The wide powers with which a Speaker is invested under the Standing Orders of the House must be exercised at all times for the benefit of the House and in the public interest. The rules and orders must be adhered to in order to ensure that there is regularity and certainty in the proceedings, and debates must be of a high standard to enable the House to set an example to the people and to other deliberative bodies in the land.

2.55 p.m.

This office exists to ensure that not only must the will of the majority be carried out but also the interest of the minority must be protected. It is in this House, the highest forum of the State, that opinions concerning the affairs of the State may be fully and openly debated in order that the people of Guyana may be given full information of the day-to-day business of the State.

Every member of this House must be accorded reasonable opportunity to express his views and it is only fair that even in the election of the Speaker members must feel free to disapprove. To disapprove or to disagree is a right of any member as it is his right to agree. This

principle is given full recognition in our Constitution as it is in the working of any parliamentary democracy. As Speaker of this House I am bound to recognize this right without feeling in any way perturbed or affected because members have expressed their right to disagree with my election as Speaker.

I do not intend to permit in this House the suppression of expression of the rights of any member merely because he disagrees with me. In turn, as Speaker of this House, I shall consider it not to be in the best interests of the nation were members to resort to tactics unbecoming of the established rules and traditions and good principles of parliamentary democracy.

I shall at all times strive to ensure that powers, dignities, liberties and privileges of which I am made guardian shall always be respected and safeguarded. My duties will be made easier and more pleasurable only if I have the confidence and respect of every member of this House. It is your co-operation that I stand in greatest need of, and for this I make a sincere and urgent appeal.

To these objects I dedicate myself while in office and in return for the co-operation of members I shall at all times endeavour to ensure that all members of the House and both Government and Opposition get their just deserves under the Constitution of Guyana and the Rules and Orders of this House.

I realize that it has been the first time since the grant of independence that a member of the legal profession has been appointed Speaker. This alone is sufficient to bring into critical scrutiny by the members of the profession and the general public the manner in which the proceedings of the House will be carried on. It will be expected that above all a member of my profession, which is most intimately concerned in the administration of justice and in vindicating the rights of each and every person in this land, should perform with the impartiality which the citizens are entitled to expect.

I came to the National Assembly on the assumption that it is a place of dignity. I came with an intention to observe all the proprieties for which Parliament is traditionally respected. I came with the intention of ensuring that improper conduct should never be charged against the House or its members by any person in this country.

I expect that hon. Members will co-operate with me in the achievement of these broad goals and in return I promise hon. Members my own co-operation to ensure that the work of the House and the proceedings in the Chamber will be worthy of the highest assembly in our country.

As we face the new challenges that lie ahead, as we face the task of building a better Guyana let us resolve to forget our small differences of the past, let us resolve to work hand in hand during this new year of consolidation and in the years that are still to come.

I wish to thank the House for electing me and I wish to thank all hon. Members who have welcomed me to this Chamber and for the kind sentiments they have expressed in respect of my election.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave to Members

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have to announce that leave has been granted to the hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Burnham) from 8th January, to 5th February, 1971. Leave has also been granted to the hon. Member Mr. Corrica from the 5th January to the 28th February, 1971.

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

SAUSAGE-MAKING MACHINE AT GUYANA MARKETING CORPORATION

QUESTION NO. 6

Mrs. DaSilva to ask the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture the following question:

- (i) Will the Minister state if the sausage-making machine at the Guyana Marketing Corporation is out of order?
- (ii) If this is so, will he say whether it needs new parts and whether these can be obtained locally or will have to be imported?
- (iii) How long will it be before it is in working order again?
- (iv) If the machine is in working order, will he say why no sausages have been on sale at the Corporation for the past three weeks?

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member Mrs. DaSilva. *[After a pause.]* As the hon. Member is not present the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture will take the usual action in this respect.

LICENCE FEE FOR TRUCKS**QUESTION NO. 7**

Mr. R. Ally to ask the Minister of Finance the following question:

Will the Minister say why owners of trucks pay a licence fee of six hundred dollars for vehicles weighing between 4,480 and 8,960 pounds when the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment) Act, 1969 (No. 34), states that trucks of the above weight shall pay only three hundred dollars?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. R. Ally. *[After a pause.]* As the hon. Member is not present, the hon. Minister of Finance will take the usual action in this respect.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTIONS

CUSTOMS DUTIES (EXEMPTION FROM IMPORT DUTIES)

ORDER, 1970 (No. 109)

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly in terms of section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirm the Customs Duties (Exemption from Import Duties) Order, 1970 (No. 109), which was made on the 26th November, 1970, and published in the Gazette on the 5th December, 1970. [**The Minister of Finance**]

Mr. Hoyte: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name in respect of an Order made under Section 8 of the Customs Ordinance.

The Order in brief seeks to amend item 27 of Part III of the First Schedule of the Customs Ordinance. Part III of the First Schedule is that part of the series of Schedules which provides for duty-free entry of goods. This Order seeks to add to that list of goods certain items which are used by manufacturers in this country. In effect, the objective of the Order is to give an advantage to persons engaged in the manufacturing industry to enable them to compete more effectively with their CARIFTA counterparts. I submit that this Order will find approval with hon. Members of this House and I ask that the Motion be put.

The Clerk read the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

CONSUMPTION TAX (AMENDMENT) ORDER, 1970
(No. 113)

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly in accordance with section 5 of the Consumption Tax Act, 1969 (No. 13), confirm the Consumption Tax (Amendment) Order, 1970 (No. 113), which was made on the 26th November, 1970, and published in the Gazette on the 12th December, 1970. [**The Minister of Finance**]

Mr. Hoyte: Mr. Speaker, this is an Order made under Section 4 of the Consumption Tax Act, 1969. Hon. Members will be familiar with the principles of that Act by which goods originating in the Carifta area enter the country duty-free and a consumption tax is the device by which Government recoups revenue which is lost as a result of duty-free concessions. This Order seeks to recoup duty lost as a result of concessions granted by Order 109 of 1970 made under Section 8 of the Customs Ordinance which has just been passed by this honourable House.

In addition thereto, sir, stoves, furnaces, grates and refrigerators made in the Carifta area are admitted duty-free and those items are accordingly added to the list in the Schedule to the Consumption Tax Ordinance as being goods upon which the consumption tax will be leviable at the percentage indicated in the Order.

3.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The Motion is proposed. [*Pause*]

As there are no other speakers I now put the Question.

The Clerk will read the Motion.

The Clerk read the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

CUSTOMS (PROHIBITION OF IMPORTS) ORDER, 1970
(No. 116)

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly in accordance with section 9 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309, confirm the Customs (Prohibition of Imports) Order, 1970 (No. 116), which was made on the 10th December, 1970, and published in the Gazette on the 16th December, 1970.” [*The Minister of Finance*]

Mr. Hoyte: Mr. Speaker, this is an Order made under section 42 of the Customs Ordinance. The operation of the Carifta Agreement has been quite satisfactory but, as is to be expected in matters of this sort, certain unscrupulous manufacturers, exporters, consignees and consignors, have found loopholes and have been certifying that goods have originated in the Carifta region, goods which in fact have originated in the Carifta region, goods which in fact have originated outside of the region, and as a result of this fraudulent representation, goods which are really liable for duty are coming into the country under duty-free concessions.

The purpose of this Order is to tighten the operation of our customs laws to prevent persons from using the CARIFTA Agreement for fraudulent purposes. It does this by giving to the Comptroller of Customs certain wide discretionary powers in relation to suspect goods. Under paragraph 2 of the Order, it will be noted that goods which are forfeitable under the Merchandise Marks Ordinance are deemed to be prohibited goods; and, secondly, goods manufactured outside of Guyana which do not bear a trade mark or which do not carry in relation to themselves a definite indication of the country of origin, will fall under a similar ban. This is intended to ensure that goods coming into the country, which purport to have originated in the

CARIFTA area, are clearly identified and marked as such. I commend this Motion to Members of this honourable House.

Mr. Speaker: This Motion is proposed. *[Pause]*

As there are no other speakers, I now put the Question.

The Clerk will read the Motion.

The Clerk read the Motion.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

ABSENCE OF THE SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: I wish to announce to the Members of the Assembly, that I shall be out of Guyana for approximately three weeks with effect from Saturday.

I should also like to take this opportunity of inviting Members and friends to some refreshments in the ante Chamber.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Adjourned accordingly at 3.12 p.m.
