

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
[V O L U M E 5]

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

3rd Sitting

2 p.m.

Thursday, 20th May, 1971

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appointed Ministers

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

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

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

Dr. the Hon. Sylvia Talbot,
Minister of Health

(Absent)

Parliamentary Secretaries

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

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

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

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

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

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

Other Members

Mr. J.N. Aaron
Miss. M.M. Ackman, Government Whip (Absent)
Mr. K. Bancroft (Absent)
Mr. N.J. Bissember (Absent – on leave)
Mr. J. Budhoo, J.P.
Mr. L.I. Chan-A-Sue
Mr. E.F. Correia
Mr. M. Corrica,
Mr. E.H.A. Fowler
Mr. R. J. Jordan
Mr. S.M. Saffee
Mr. R.C. Van Sluytman
Mr. M. Zaheeruddeen, J.P.
Mr. L.E. Willems

Members of the Opposition

People's Progressive Party

Dr.C.B. Jagan,
Leader of the Opposition
Mr. Ram Karran
Mr. R. Chandisingh
Dr. F.H.W. Ramsahoye, S.C.
Mr. D.C. Jagan, J.P.,
Deputy Speaker
Mr. E.M.G. Wilson
Mr. A.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. (Absent)
Mr. R. Ally
Mr. E. L. Ambrose
Mrs. L.M. Branco
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mr. Bholu Persaud

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

(Absent)
(Absent – on leave)

United Force

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

(Absent)

Independent

Mr. R.E. Cheeks

(Absent)

OFFICERS

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

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 PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Papers was laid:

Schedule of Losses of Cash and Stores totalling \$13,443.000. [**The Minister of Trade** (Leader of the House) on behalf of the Minister of Finance]

**REQUEST FOR LEAVE TO MOVE THE ADJOURNMENT
OF THE ASSEMBLY ON DEFINITE MATTERS OF
URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE****Registration to become citizens of Guyana**

Mr. R.D. Persaud: Mr. Speaker, under section 4(1) of the Guyana Citizenship Act, in order to become Guyanese citizens, person born in the Commonwealth who have come to this county or who have been brought as children to this country, must apply to be registered at a cost of \$8.20.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you are seeking leave to move the Adjournment. You are not permitted to speak on the Motion.

Mr. R.D. Persaud: Your Honour, I was just explaining. I feel that the matter I refer to is a matter of great urgency because it affects a large number of people and I feel that the whole exercise is immoral. I therefore seek your permission on this occasion to have this matter debated in the House. Many people have approached us in the Office of the Leader of the Opposition and had their names and addresses noted, complaining that the whole exercise is unfair to them because they have given their sweat and blood to the country, they have served the country for many years, and they have always regarded themselves as citizens of Guyana.

Mr. Speaker: In terms of Standing Order No. 11 any member is entitled to ask leave to move the adjournment of the Assembly on a definite matter of urgent public importance.

Generally, the conditions attached to the granting of such a request are stringent and it is the duty of the Chair to ensure that these conditions remain so.

In the first place, the matter sought to be discussed must be definite, that is, it must be specific; it must be urgent, that is, it must be raised at the earliest opportunity; and it must be in the public interest and require the immediate attention of the Assembly. It must call for action which is beyond the ordinary administration of the law and these conditions must be taken into consideration and be complied with before the matter can be raised.

The matter which the Honourable Member, Mr. Persaud, now seeks to raise deals with the requirement that persons born in Commonwealth countries but who have lived for most of their lives in Guyana must before the 26th May, 1971, in order to become citizens and must pay \$8.20 in doing so.

The requirement for the registration of such person was notified by article 22 of the Constitution of Guyana which was first published in May, 1966, that is, five years ago. The fees to be paid were provided for by the Guyana Citizenship Regulations, 1967, which were made in September, 1967, under Section 16 of the Guyana Citizenship Act, 1967.

In my opinion, that matter is not urgent. I am not, therefore, prepared, in the circumstances, to allow the Motion to be debated.

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National Assembly

2.35 – 2.45 p.m.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

Debate on President's Address

Assembly resumed debate on the following Motion:

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the Government's policy adumbrated in the President's Address for the present Session of Parliament made to the National Assembly at its Sitting on Friday, the 14th of May, 1971.

Mr. Lall: Your Honour, there is a grave omission in the President's Address to the Parliament in that no mention was made in relation to what policy the Government is prepared to pursue in the current session of this Parliament and there are many matters pending pertaining to labour and the working-class people in our country.

As you are aware, Your Honour, labour is responsible for the economy of our country and when such matters are omitted from the President's Address, I am led to think that the Government was not taking into consideration the question of enhancing the working and living conditions of the working-class of Guyana. For instance, we would like to know what is the Government's intention pertaining to the Trade Disputes Bill. We want to know; the nation wants to know. We are aware that the T.U.C. is against the enactment of such legislation in our country. The largest union in our country, the Guyana Agriculture Workers Union, is against the enactment of such legislation in our country. I have a pamphlet here “Injunction has no place in labour disputes”. If this legislation is to be enacted and made law in our country it will be as an injunction against labour disputes because when there is a labour dispute in British Columbia the Government sought to move an injunction.

In Guyana, if such legislation should be enacted, then it would not be the Government that would serve an injunction, the Minister of Labour would be empowered to do so. We have a system that the nation is pursuing. We call it the Co-operative Republic. We would like the Government to show co-operation in deeds and not in words because the whole trade union movement of Guyana is against the Trade Disputes Bill and we are asking that his Bill be cast aside. I just want to refer, with your permission, sir, to the *Mirror* of the Sunday, April 11, 1971, page 1:

“Hanging still like the sword of Damochles over the heads of workers is the anti-strike Trade Disputes Bill. It is time for Government to make a clear and final announcement that it has abandoned the idea.”

We do hope that the Government has abandoned this idea of the Trade Disputes Bill.

We would like to know what is Government's position as regards the enactment of a national minimum wage. As the nation is progressing, we must have progressive legislation to secure the rights of the workers. The time for legislation of national minimum wage is long overdue. There are workers who are receiving \$1.50 for an eight hour day. We want the government to protect these workers. When the cost of living goes up, all and sundry have to bear it. We are therefore calling on this Government to enact legislation, without delay, in order to have a national minimum wage of not less than \$5 per day.

What did we hear recently? We hear the cry of “wage freeze” at the public corporations. How can it be possible to have a wage freeze at the public corporations when the cost of living is going up daily? Could the Government possible ask for wage freeze? If we allow a wage freeze at the public corporation, then it would not be too long before a wage freeze is implemented all over this country although the cost of living is going up. Sir, instead of the Minister of Trade trying to stablise the cost of living, he keeps on heckling. He is the heckling Minister of Trade.

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2.45 – 2.55 p.m.

In this country we have had Commission upon commission set up, yet when the Commissions hand in their Reports they are shelved. First, there was the Ramsaroop Commissions dealing with the question of watchmen. Over three years ago this Report was handed in to the Government but up to now the Report is not declassified. We want to know when this Report will be made public. The Report on Petrol Filling Stations was shelved. We heard nothing about it. What is the Minister prepared to do about this? The Report on the hours of work of domestic servants has not been classified.

2.55 p.m.

All this Government is doing is setting up Commissions. The Building Trade Committee was set up to investigate the building trade in our country. I notice there is a shortage of cement since the Government has introduced the External Trade Bureau. We are asking why the Government did not see it fit to declassify these reports? Then we have the Chabrol Committee set up for the survey of chemicals and pesticides. This Committee handed in its report over two years now.

I should like to quote the Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security for the Year 1969, page 40, paragraph 161.

“In the field of agricultural safety and the handling of dangerous chemicals, much progress has been made through the committee surveying the use of pesticides and chemicals in Guyana. The Committee reported to the Minister of Health in 1969, and implementation of the recommendations should go a far way in satisfying all parties concerned.”

This was in 1969. We are now in the year 1971 and still the report of this Committee has not been declassified. Only last week the G.A.W.U. had to take up a matter pertaining to workers transporting poison along with water they have to drink, and along with their meals. We have lodged strong objections to this. Then we got the Ministry to send a factory inspector and

here is the recommendation: It is stated clearly that the workers should not transport by any means any toxic chemical along with their means or water which they have to drink. I mentioned in this House that a worker at Enmore drank water from the canal and died instantly. Why? Because the estate kept on spraying toxic chemicals in the fields and in the canals where the people have to dwell and work. This is why we are asking that Government declassify these reports so that action can be taken. [*Interruption*] We should also look after the welfare from dying out like chickens and birds.

Two people at Buxton are mainly dependent on the sale of mangoes for a living. Mango trees at Buxton are not bearing because of the spraying of toxic chemicals. The plants are dying out. We would have liked to see in the President's Address that these reports will be declassified.

3.05 p.m.

In 1969 the Deputy Prime Minister and hon. Minister of Finance indicated in his Budget Speech that Government is prepared to pay Government workers and public corporations over six to eight million dollars. When I spoke during the Budget Debate, I indicated that Government must make this payment as quickly as possible because while the grass of growing the horse is starving. I mention that the job evaluation exercise is just a smoke-screen to delay payment to the workers. We had an article, "CSA asks who have become real men?" On page 1 in the Mirror of Sunday, 11th May, 1971, I quotes:

"The Guyana Civil Service Association wants to know who are the small men in Guyana that have become big men so far in the Co-operative Republic.

The question was posed in a foreword to the annual report of the organisation which is to be presented at the annual conference at the end of this month.

The foreword also noted that the job evaluation exercise has taken more than one year to complete. In the foreword to the report the two union officials call upon the Government to speed up the exercise.

Meanwhile the C.S.A. and the Federation of Unions of Government Employees have sent letters to the Public Service Ministry to remind the Government about the anxiety to have interim pay for their estimated 1,500 members, pending a general revision of wages for further interim payments, and salaries.

So far both organisations have also received acknowledgements to letters they have sent but no word about a meeting to discuss the claim. Thus they have now sent the letters reminding the Government about their claims.”

The article of itself shows the slipshod manner in which Government servants were treated. From 1964 to 1969, the cost of living has gone up by 21.2 per cent, but the wages and salaries of Government workers remain almost the same as they were in 1964. How can there be a satisfied and efficient Government Service? No wonder day after day we see in the papers, news of pilfering in Government Departments.

Mr. Speaker: Time!

Mr. Hamid: I move that the hon. Member be given 15 minutes to continue his speech.

Mr. Balchand Persaud *seconded.*

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Lall: We are asking that full employment and a guaranteed weekly wage should be given to sugar workers. Government must solve the unemployment and under employment problem in our country. Quite recently, we hear that over 300 workers were retrenched from the C.D.C. saw-mill. What did Government do to grapple with this situation? I have seen that the

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3.05 – 3.15 p.m.

hon. Minister of Mines and Forests, Mr. Hubert Jack, is now having discussions with the C.D.C. so that the workers can be reinstated. We hope that the discussions with the C.D.C. are fruitful.

Only last week, we took up with the Minister of Labour and Social Security (Mr. Carrington) the question of retrenchment of sugar workers and we pointed out that from 1958 to 1968, 5,884 workers were retrenched. This means that if each retrenched worker has a family of five, then we will have 29,420 employ bellies to deal with. We would have lived to see included in the President's Address, what Government intends to do in grappling with the unemployment; underemployment situation.

3.15 p.m.

I now quote from page 3 and 4 in the President's Address:

“My Government, through the National Cane Farming Committee, will continue to assist the small cane farmers to produce more sugar. To date 1,700 cane farmers have received loans in excess of \$3 million and the services of Extension Officers and Research Technicians.

In 1969, these farmers produced 24,931 tons of sugar or 6.8 per cent of the country's production. In 1970 they produced 26,439 tons of 8.5 per cent of the total. The target for 1971 is 30,000 tons.”

But while we heard the President making his pronouncement about what the proposed production of sugar will be for 1971, we did not hear what protection Government is prepared to secure for the sugar producers in our country. Nothing has been mentioned here. Why was nothing said, in the Address about securing markets for Guyana's sugar? On page 14 the **Mirror of 16th May, 1971**, the headline is “**U.K. DEAL WITH THE E.C.M., SELL-OUT OF OUR SUGAR PRODUCERS – DR. JAGAN**”. We have not seen or heard a statement from the

Government on the question of securing markets for Guyana's sugar. .why this omission from the President's Address? Let the Government answer. It is our duty to tell, as Opposition, the Government where it is wrong, where it has omitted an essential subject matter pertaining to the lives and welfare of the Guyanese nation.

The People's Progressive Party is asking the Government to enact legislation for severance pay in Guyana. In 1963 I moved a motion in Parliament on the subject it was unanimously passed in this honourable House. What has happened since? The Motion has been shelved. We are calling on the Government for immediate enactment of legislation for severance pay in Guyana.

I have recent case. A Guyanese gentleman worked at Versailles for 27 years; he is now 55. During the course of his employment he received an accident to his knee and he was declared unfit for work and was given 20 per cent permanent partial disability. Mr. Adams has 13 children and his wife to maintain. All this man receives from the National Insurance Scheme as permanent partial disability is \$9.50 per fortnight, which he went to the estate to seek employment the estate said, "There is no employment that we can offer". If a severance pay Bill had been enacted as law in our country, Mr. Adams could have received a lump sum for his 27 years of service. When the Minister was approached he said that he draft bill was at the Law Offices. We are asking the Government to have a law officers placed at the Ministry of Labour to deal with legal matters, not only with a severance pay Bill but with matters pertaining to the National Insurance Scheme which come up from time to time.

Then there is the question of appeals to the N.I.S, Legal representatives of workers appealing to Legal representatives of workers appealed to the N.I.S. 18 to 20 months ago and there has been no result. What is the Government doing to cure these ills of the N.I.S.?

I am calling upon Government to enact, without delay, the severance pay law so as to protect the poor working class. We want legislation to make provision for a poll. The workers must decide by democratic means which Union they want to represent them.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, time.

Mr. Hamid: I beg to move that the hon. Member be given member given a further 15 minutes in order wind up.

Mr. Balchand Persaud *seconded*

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Lall: We must have a democratic institution which would allow the workers to select the union of their choice to represent them. I have a copy of the *Guyana Graphic* dated Sunday, April 4, 1971, where the Principal of the Critchlow Labour College, Mr. Johnson, made a statement that the workers are running to the political parties. Jagan's party and Burnham's party, for representation. In his statement, he said that he workers are showing more loyalty to the political parties than to the trade union movement.

If you have trade union leaders representing management instead of representing labour, to whom will the workers run? Obviously, to the place where they can have representation. I am saying that the trade unionists in Guyana are not trained sufficiently. This is why they have to accuse both the P.P.P. and the P.N.C. of usurping the powers and functions of the trade union movement. If they had known about the class struggle, the workers would have aligned themselves behind them but they do not know one thing about the class struggle. All they know is the teaching that Uncle Sam gave them.

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I should like to say if you will permit me, sir, that there are three phases in the class struggle; first, the ideological struggle, the battle of ideas, the working class against the capitalist class. The workers should be *au fait* of their functions as the working class. Then the second phase is the economic phase struggle and that is in the trade union front, where there is a bread and butter struggle. The only way a trade unionist, is by knowing about the class struggle. He has to have an ideological background; he has to know why he is struggling as a trade unionist, and against whom he is struggling. The highest struggle of all is the political struggle.

Unfortunately, if workers do not back a socialist-oriented party, they cannot receive proper representation. If they would have backed the part that would represent them without favour, fear, or partiality, and that is the P.P.P. They are accusing Mr. Burnham and Dr. Jagan of the usurping of power, but I said the political struggle is the highest form of the class struggle and si if you have stooges in the trade union front dealing with trade union matters in a slipshod manner, then they have to run to the political parties.

Workers must have a voice in industrial policy. I do not want to take up much of the time of the House, sir, but labour is responsible for the economy of the country and you, sir, should permit me to deal with it fully because this is a grave omission from the President's Address. We are saying that workers must have a voice in industrial policy and I want to quote from a book: **Trade Unions in Britain, A voice in industrial policy**. We are asking that laws should be enacted in our country so that the workers and their representatives would have voice in the policy making body of any industry or enterprise. I do not want to read it because I would give too much education to the P.N.C. boys.

3.35 p.m.

We are saying that Government should see to it that the policy formulated for industry and enterprise should have also the sanction of the workers. There should be a labour code dealing with labour welfare and the ethics of trade union leaders. We have a letter here sent to

the Secretary, Mr. Benjamin, where the Minister of Labour drew his attention to the mismanagement of union funds and pointed out that a matter of this nature can be handled by the Registry and the Director of Public Prosecutions. We are saying that in future such an omission must not take place. We must not have a recurrence of the omission in such an important Address given by the President of the country.

I do hope that my advice has not fallen on deaf ears but that it will bear some fruit because if a law is enacted, as I am advising the Government, then it would protect the working class in Guyana.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary Mr. Haynes.

Mr. Haynes: Mr. Speaker, the President's Address has been described in this honourable House by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran, as being lengthy and empty. Perhaps this statement epitomizes the emptiness of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, because, had he taken the time to read the President's address, he would have noted that in the Address was embodied the Government's shift in emphasis towards self-help and self-reliance as embodied in the Budget Speech of the then Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister presented to this House in December of last year. The Deputy Prime Minister's speech page the way for this shift when at page 4 paragraph 1 the Minister said and I quote:

“The shift of emphasis from heavy reliance on foreign aid has been articulated. The new direction of self-reliance through co-operativism and self-help is based on local human competence, and proper utilization of local resources.”

Self-help and self-reliance come from firstly, the belief and the understanding and the competence of person to recognise what they can, at home by their own efforts, produce to the national benefit of our country.

Self-help has become a way of life in Guyana. Over the years when our hon. friends on the opposition Benches ruled the roost self-help was what you would consider to be a dead horse. Fortunately the P.N.C.; coming on the scene, has imbued a new spirit of self-help and this spirit of self-help is expected to give new self-reliance, ownership and control of our natural resources.

But I should like to confine my remarks to self-help and self-reliance through the co-operative movement. Much has been said about the efforts of the Government through the External Trade Bureau. Much has been done by the opposition in Guyana and big business to discredit the External Trade Bureau. But what do we find? The Government is pursuing a line aimed at reducing the cost of living through co-operatives. We have embarked upon the establishment of a wholesale consumers co-operative from which wholesale consumer co-operative there will be retail outlets. This wholesale co-op and retail outlets will ensure that the goods which big business now refuses to bring to the working-man will be brought on direct indent to the wholesale co-op for distribution by its retail agencies. This will ensure that the broad masses of the people in Guyana will now be no longer held at ransom by a conglomeration of big business and the Opposition in this Parliament.

We, as a Government, conscious of our responsibility to the people, had expected this type of coming together by these people. As a result, we have already, as I said before, made the necessary preparation through the wholesale and retail outlets.

3.45 p.m.

But the wholesale and retail outlet is not just another stop-gap to prevent the masses of this country from starving, but the intention of the wholesale co-operative is to go into the field of processing and manufacture of the surplus agricultural items which we have in Guyana today.

The end result, is to ensure that the question of import substitution is being properly handled. If the hon. Members would shut their empty mouths and take the time to read the

President's Address, they would recognise that the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry responsible for co-operatives, will combine their efforts to have agricultural co-operatives set up over the length and breadth of Guyana. The coming together of the Co-operative and Agriculture Departments will give national direction in the agricultural policies based on co-operatives, thus, as we go along, we will be sure that in a few years' time we will have achieved the philosophy of producing to feed ourselves and to use our surpluses for export trade.

We have heard in this House an attempt by the hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall to find out what is Government's position in relation to a Bill dealing with trade disputes, but I want the hon. member to understand that this Government will not telegraph its punches as to where and at what precise time we propose to take certain action.

The hon. Member Mr. Stoby spoke of the people suffering as a result of essential business due to the External Trade Bureau. I would hope that he hon. member would see that the Government is moving in a direction where it can remove this burden from the people. It is important that the hon. Member, who lives in the vast savannah areas of this country, if he wants to do something meaningful for the people he claims to represent, should go around encouraging them to follow government's plan of agriculture and co-operativism, to ensure that they plant in relation to the agricultural needs, so that they would be able to use the agricultural policy, first, as a means of providing employment for the people, secondly, as a means of proper utilization of land, and thirdly, as a co-operative venture for the people of the area.

If we look in some depth of the President's Address we will note that this Government is moving in a direction where it will ensure that the small men, the ordinary people, will be able to make decision through the co-operative for the economic benefit of Guyana. The People's Progressive party, through its leader, has said that it has long abandoned the idea of co-operativism – [*Interruption.*] but I want to make it clear that this Government recognises that the

co-operative is the means for the mobilization of the financial, physical, and human resources of the people, and we are dedicated towards this effort.

We do not, like Government in the past, and in the Rochdale pioneering days, believe that we should not assist the co-operative as a means of development. This Government is not anti-co-operativism but is pro-co-operativism and therefore it is prepared to discriminate in the interest of the co-operative. It seems to me that if the Opposition intends that the country should move forward towards its economic goals, then the time has come when the members of the Opposition ought to come together with the Government to redirect their minds towards self-help, co-operativism and self-reliance, for we do not intend to abandon this road on which we now move and it is for all parties concerned to recognise the role which they have to play and to play it well.

Indeed, working together, we can redistribute the wealth of the nation. Working together in co-operation we will be able to ensure that the small man is a real man. Until the Opposition understands and is prepared to come along the road of co-operativism, only then will it be in a position to get the fruits of redistribution of wealth, redirection in the agricultural fields, the direction in co-operatives and self-reliance and self-help. Self-reliance can be achieved once we are educated to understand that self-reliance must come from our belief that it is important.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I may just quote from page 12 of the Budget Speech of 1971, paragraph 4, where the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said;

Social justice and Republican Co-operativism entail not merely national, or even public sector, control over the economy but also a just distribution of income.”

I commend these words to the members of the Opposition and wish to let them know that through we recognise the whisperings, the meetings, overt and covert, with the business community to create problems for the Government, to mobilise the workers against a Government that is bent on making sure for all time that all of the people in this country get their

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just deserts, we hope they would find the time to make use of their ability, whether socialist as they claim, whether capitalist or communist, whatever they claim, to assist this Government in really getting the people together to move on to the heights of economic stability.

3.55 p.m.

In closing I should like to say that at the 13th Annual Delegates Congress of the People's National Congress the leader of that party and Prime Minister of Guyana said at page 15:

“Some opposition will be frontal and crude. That is easy to combat and crush. But we have to be on the alert for the subtler forms: the whisperings, the complaints of those who simulate self-pity and advertise their non-existent patriotism, while banking their profits, in New York, Zurich, Paris and even Lisbon, the rascal devices which raise the cost of living for which your government is then blamed, the crumbs which with protestations of love they will throw at you to suborn you and subvert your loyalty, and all this to feather the nests to your exploiters and to maintain your servitude. All opposition, however, regardless of its form, will make us, in the P.N.C. stronger”.

[Applause]

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps this may be a convenient time to suspend the sitting for half an hour.

Suspension at 3.57 p.m.

4.30 p.m.

On resumption -

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Sutton.

Mr. Sutton: Mr. Speaker, I must once again take this opportunity to congratulate the Government on the presentation, so ably carried out, of the President's Address which is printed in this document. We on this side of the House have said, over and over again, that we can find little to criticize in the Government's intention both what it writes and what it says from time to time, but what we are very much worried about is the difference between the policies as adumbrated in writing and the actual carrying out and performance of these policies.

The policy of the Government, as set out in this document covering the President's Address, can be amply summarized in the second, third and fourth paragraphs on pages 1 and 2. I will take the opportunity to repeat by reading these policies which are clearly set out and then I will quote from a further statement where the intention is set out and try to relate it to policies as they are actually carried out. If one looks at the centre of paragraph 2 on page 1 the intention is stated:

“...In planning for development in the future my Government has three basic objectives in mind; feeding ourselves – this means that agricultural output must be increased appreciable; housing ourselves – much will depend here on the effectiveness of the self-help movement, and clothing ourselves – this indeed is the most ambitious objective since not all the raw materials are yet produced in Guyana.

It goes on to say:

“To achieve these goals we must ensure that Guyanese own and control the national resources, and that they are given every opportunity to participate in the development effort and in the exploitation of these resources. We must ensure that the production structure is transformed by a process of diversification, the establishment of linkages within and between industries and the development of a proper nexus between the rural economy and the rest of the economic system.

This has always been a very vital statement made by the Government, but has failed to carry out what it said it would do; the statement continues:

“... We will encourage the widest consultation on plans and on decision which effect the daily lives of the people. We must ensure that there is the maximum use of the domestic human, material and financial resources, to provide the investment flexibility which external assistance cannot always provide. We must encourage and develop the regional drive towards Caribbean integration, in order to exploit as fully as possible the opportunities for development of the region as a whole. We must foster and strengthen the spirit of self-reliance, already present in the majority of the population.”

If we could be assured that the Government's is to implement, fearless and impartially, what is written here whether you agree with it or not, we would be heartened that the Government is making every possible attempt to improve the economic situation in the country.

We will start to examine the statement which covers all the essential plans of the Government – feeding ourselves, housing ourselves, and clothing ourselves. These are praiseworthy intentions. But as I said before, let us try to examine how these situations have been implemented and let us try to see how the Government has gone about trying to create an atmosphere for co-operation between the various sectors of the community and let us see the pride to create this nexus that it talks about between the rural economy and the rest of the economic system.

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The thing that has struck me within the last few days is that the Government has stated that it cannot find money to send a representative team to the I.L.O. Conference. A casual observer, moreso a person interested in politics and in the affairs of the country, must wonder how it is that a Government which claims to base its strength on the laboring masses can treat an important conference of the International labour Organisation as just another conference and something that is not vital to the progress of its supporters who, as it claims, are the masses to whom the deliberation of I.L.O. must be vital importance.

We have read in several authoritative journals that if any country can afford to ignore the I.L.O., certainly the developing and under –developed areas of the world and the newly independent territories cannot afford not to subscribe to I.L.O. and to do all they can to be part of its plans because I.L.O.’s efforts are really directed to improvement of conditions in these countries and their views should always be heard.

It has been suggested that the cost of sending a proper team to this Conference is in the vicinity of \$25,000. If the Government cannot find \$25,000 for such an exercise, need I ask any intelligent member of our community whether some of us cannot name several exercise which we are certain would be less lasting value to the citizens of this country.

It is deplorable that a Government which calls itself a labour Government cannot find it possible to establish its priorities so that a vitally important conference like the I.L.O. Conference does not have to be passed up. The Government says that it will encourage consultation in order to solve our problems and by this it means that consultation is invited when it finds itself in a position where there is difficulty in knowing where to turn next. This is particularly important when they say:

“Our aim is to establish an egalitarian society and my Government intends to make certain that there is economic justice for all.”

It is well known that in areas such as this on the main objectives is supposed to be – I do not think there is any contention over this – a true and just return for the people who work. The question is whether workers are, in fact, getting a true return in relation to their contribution to the economic development of the country.

On page 2 of the President’s Address we find that the Government quite rightly states;

“Guyanese control of the decision-making machinery of such resources-based undertakings which are non-Guyanese in their origin is important; but in addition the

development of enterprises which are purely national in origin must go hand in hand with this exercise.”

The Government speaks of control of the machinery in almost the same voice that it speaks of the question of consultation, as wide as possible. If consultation takes place before decisions are made and if, after consultation, the minority, as is necessary, gives way to the majority, at least you will have the satisfaction of knowing that every single avenue has been explored and that after such exploration the Government in its wisdom has arrived at a decision which must have taken into consideration the various points of view that were drawn to its attention. That being so, we would have to agree that the policy agreed on would be the best for the country, at least until the Government of the day can be changed.

On the question of exercising control over the decision-making machinery, hon. Members will remember that in a previous document the Government said it would work on a partnership basis with co-operativism, private enterprise, self-reliance and state control. We wonder whether this supposed partnership is deemed to be based on this attitude: “What we say, irrespective of anything else, is what is necessary”. We know that you are thinking that consultation is not necessary. That is the only conclusion one can come to when we observe that the most vital national decisions are arrived at and only after the decisions are made is there any attempt to consult with the various sections of the economic and social community.

One wonders if the Government does not recognise the importance of making use, where ever possible, of practical experience in conjunction with theoretical improvement. It must be borne in mind that very often untried theories may have pitfalls. If you consult people who have attained a measure of success you do not have to take what they tell you as correct. On the other hand, you may assume that many things are being tried for the first time but you may find out that they were tried and rejected as unsuitable. That may cause you to do some second thinking and then you may arrive at a solution, or attempt to arrive at a solution, in a way which may not be as painful as when you adopt other solutions to what are, in fact, age-old problems.

Therefore, I would invite the Government, when making its radical changes, to do all it can to ensure that all sections of the community are at least given an opportunity of being associated with its views. Invite expressions of opinion and after you have heard all those expressions of opinion nobody would be able to say that you arrived at a conclusion without examining all the factors concerned.

Let us now look and see what is set out in the President's Address under Agriculture, where the major objective is to feed ourselves. The Government rightly points out that import substitution is vital to the advance of this country. Let us examine the steps the Government has taken, and it taking first, to direct people's minds into the channels of using locally-produced food and locally-produced articles instead of foreign-manufactured articles and foreign-produced food.

The Government says that it is deeply involved in a drive in agriculture and one would think one of the immediate necessities which the Government would see would be keep under constant review what must be done in the agricultural economic department in order to improve the production of traditionally local crops, to see what is the best action to take in order to prevent gluts in the production of food to which we are accustomed and to avoid waste in crops that the people, because of long practice, know how to produce.

Although the Government will introduce diversification, it is very clear that we will have for a long time to continue to make use of traditionally produced articles. We hope we will be able to improve on the use we make of them. Let us consider, for example, the agricultural products which we have produced over the years in great quantities. Very often when the crops are reaped they do not help farmers but cause hardship because they cannot be sold at a price which would make it worthwhile for farmers to produce in such quantities.

I refer, of course, to plantains; I refer, of course, to starch and bitter cassava; I refer, of course, to the encouragement that is being given to the production of things like cassareep. We

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have the know-how and, if Government can find export markets where meat preservatives are widely used, I have no doubt whatsoever that cassareep could become an important export. But marketing research is necessary. We must find the means of bringing these products to the attention of person overseas. We must find out how to set up marketing guidelines. How can one expect people to buy things when they know nothing about them? How can one expect them to become interested in products that they have never sampled?

In the present exercise for the nationalisation of the Demerara Bauxite Company we have heard what an important part starch could play in the processing of bauxite. We have heard the grave complaints made by the Government that the bauxite company did nothing to encourage the use of starch when it had every opportunity to do so; that it did nothing to sue starch as a flocculent though, of course, problems may have arisen. As any businessman would have done, the company took the line of least resistance and used wheaten flour because that naturally created no problems.

If the Government expects that an item such as starch will be used as a flocculent in the processing of bauxite, it must have some means of guaranteeing the quality. In other words, it is vitally important that an economic department in the Ministry of Agriculture be made to function – no matter how small it may be – at once and not in some distant future time. The Government should begin to find and recommended methods by which the things that are produced may be standardized.

The Government must be in a position to recommend to farmers what action to take when they have thousands of bunches of plantains which are spoiling. The Government should be able to advise farmers how best to keep them or how to turn the plantains into plantain flower. It should tell farmers what to do to ensure that they lose no opportunity to turn their produce into money; what to do to prevent eddoes from being what we call “waterish? Farmers should be told why eddoes should be plant under certain condition. We allow people to go ahead and plant these things in thousands and we allow them to cry when the produced are not of the right quality or, if they are, no immediate use can be made of them before they go bad.

In this respect, I am sure that several hon. Members and the public will have heard that there are fishing trawlers operating out of Georgetown which are licensed to catch shrimp and prawns, a special type of shrimp. The men who operate these trawlers are made to throw away the fish that they catch because if they bring them in they would disturb the operation of the fishing sector in the local market. These operators have to throw away the fish they catch because they are no given licences for anything but shrimp.

I would be glad if the hon. Minister would correct me if I am wrong because I have been asked about this in Trinidad and in other countries. If the hon. Minister of Agriculture could tell me that this is not so it would give me great pleasure as I would not then have to try to find why the fish cannot be brought in and some attempt made to produce fish-meal or to put it to some other use. I should be glad to have a direct answer on this so that I would be in a position to answer people when they comment on it. It is certainly something that is very difficult to defend. It shows very little ingenuity that we cannot find some means of utilizing the fish by manufacturing a secondary product and producing something out of it rather than throw it down the drain after somebody has gone to the trouble of catching it for us.

We notice that it is the Government's intention to improve the livestock development. This is laudable. As the Minister of Agriculture is himself a vet, it would be very surprising if efforts in this direction do not bear fruit. I am always prepared to give the Government praise for doing well and that is possible why I shall never become a straight-line professional politician. I am always prepared to criticize wrong on whichever side I see it and when I have lost, as long as all the facts are known, I am always prepared not to consciously sabotage any effort the Government makes to improve the lot of people in the country.

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I notice further, in relation to agriculture, that it is the Government's policy, as set out in the last paragraph on page 3:

“to plough back into the industry surplus funds earned from the marketing of rice.”

Now, sir, I do not think anyone at this moment will refuse to give Government credit for its sincerity in attempting to improve the rice industry. I must preface my remarks by saying I claim to know almost nothing on the subject of rice but what I am about to say is copied almost word for word from one of the Government's imported experts, a man who is here to advise the Government on how the rice industry is to be improved and to become a real factor in the wealth of this country. This gentleman has said that our real problem in rice, though there are day-to-day problems in production, is in our marketing of rice. We are now trying to develop and produce certain varieties of rice primarily because they are in demand in the countries where we hope to sell our rice.

What is difficult for rice producers in other areas to understand is why we find it so difficult to encroach on the markets which are not far from us, or to make a bigger encroachment on the markets not far from us. The experts say he cannot understand why it is that they cannot see that our rice could be sold more cheaply than the American rice, which is popular in some markets, when we have the ability to produce rice almost in exactly the same manner to suit the people who have eaten American rice and have become accustomed to it. I would appear that the marketing of rice can be given a harder look.

Now I move on to the question as stated on page 4:

“The corporation, with the aid of the Co-operative Department will work at the organisation of numerous individual farmers at various supply centres into Marketing Co-operatives, which will be able to improve in various ways marketing efficiency and the farmers' standard of living.”

This is a very laudable intention but I am sure the Government realizes that his touches on the question I mentioned a few moments ago, the question of quality of produce and getting it

to the distributing centres at such a time when people will want to buy it, and not dropping the price of good after it has already gone bad.

There ought to be some marketing research, knowing what are the areas and levels of consumption. It is an ordinary exercise to the Water Street merchant as the Minister of Trade possibly knows by now. One will find that when there is a glut in Water Street of potatoes, or onions, or any perishable commodity, the merchants know when the next ship is coming in, they study the amount of potatoes that will arrive on the next boat, they know if the boat comes when the price is falling, that the potatoes will go bad. They drop the prices when the article are perfectly good and consumable.

One goes into Water Street intending to spend 20 cents to buy two pounds of potatoes but in the meantime, the price has been dropped and instead of paying 10 cents a pound, one pays 8 cents a pound. What does the buyer do? He buys four pounds instead of two pounds and he finds himself spending more than he intended to spend.

The trucks of the Guyana marketing Corporation go into all parts of the country only when the goods are starting to go bad. They drop the price and even at that price nobody wants to buy. That is poor marketing. We should investigate and if we are to improve our marketing of local goods, the centres at various points must have an atmosphere of good supply, indifferent supply, and bad supply. When the supply is very good and you have more than you can sell, do not wait until it goes bad. Drop the price and give the people the goods rather than wait until you have to throw them away.

We move on from agriculture and I have made some extensive notes on the remarks of my good friend, the hon. Minister of Trade (Mr. Ramsaroop) in respect of the External Trade Bureau. Among the things that we noted very clearly was that the hon. Minister thought it very important for everybody to know the truth. It is vitally important that everybody should know the truth so that no smoke-screens can be put up and that blame will be put in the right quarter;

the Government will be given the slap on the back when it warrants it, and it must be given the cane on its pants when it warrants it. The truth, as the hon. Minister himself said, will make you free, and I think it is high time that the factors pertaining to the External Trade Bureau be properly aired and the operations of the villainous section of the community, known as the merchants and the commission agents, be properly aired, then leave it to the people and any intelligent person to judge what is the true position.

Mr. Speaker: Time!

Mr. Hamid: I move that the hon. member be given 15 minutes to continue his speech.

Mr. Wilson seconded.

Mr. Sutton: The hon. Minister spoke of the vicious situation. Imagine how vicious it is! Do you know what is talking place? Imports are stockists, are agents, they are wholesalers and retailers. How immoral is this situation that one man or one firm can be all these things at one time! Let us examine the difference between agents, stockists, wholesalers, and retailers, and let us be satisfied that we have them in their true perspective and realise the full depth of their villainy.

What is a commission agent, this fellow who is so wicked that he takes money out of the people's pockets? A commission agent is just another salesman. Does anyone call a property agent a villain because he hawks the town around and gets a property sold on a commission? We will determine just now who is more blameworthy, whether the Government who takes a commission that the commission agent never took, or the commission agents themselves.

This is a vital importance because the Government states that the only way to control the cost of foodstuffs and the cost of living generally is by the establishment of the External Trade Bureau. The Government has not told us true facts, namely, that it wants to add to its revenue even at the expense of a few of its citizens who have earned an honest living and who did a job of work for the money that they earned.

The Government tells us how difficult the cement situation has been; how these rouses, these rascals the dealers held out on them on cement. Did the Government tell this House that the commission agents were getting 1 ½ cents as commission on a sack of cement and now the Government itself is taking 5 cents commission on a sack? The Government tells us that it has reduced the cost of living. Hon. Members should ask themselves what work a commission agent does.

The hon. Minister of Trade will find out – I do not know how long it will take him – that the only way to keep prices under control is to have goods in regular supply. Whatever this Government does, whatever any Government does, if goods are in short supply black marketing cannot be stopped because no person is going to allow his child to starve for a tin of milk. When he cannot get it at the controlled price he will allow the dealer to write a bill at whatever price he wants. Therefore, unless goods are in free supply, the controlling of prices will be a meaningless exercise.

Certainly the Government knows that the infliction of severe penalties will work to a certain point only, but to keep prices in their right perspective, to keep goods in regular supply, it will be necessary to ensure that the wheels of competition are kept turning; it will be necessary for the Government to ensure that it buys at the best prices; it will be necessary for it to ensure that the methods of distribution are not hindered rather than helped. If the government distributes the goods it will find out, if necessary the hard way, that unless a fair margin is allowed for the distribution of goods it will have to subsidise such distribution because no person will continue to do something unless he can make a living out of it.

The hon. Minister of Trade is in the unhappy and unfortunate position of not having been in business himself at any time. It is so difficult for him to absorb the true atmosphere that exists that he is bound to take the advice of absolute theorists. A couple of weeks ago when the Government appointed an advisory committee it was trying to show the citizens of Guyana and the public that the members of the Government were so all-wise on all subjects that they could operate the External Trade Bureau without having an advisory committee which would be able to draw to their attention the practical problems that would arise and which bore no relation to the theoretical solution offered by trained personnel. Their advisers may have economic degrees but the conditions under which they were trained are, in fact, 10, 15, 20 years outdated. The ideas they have are no longer in operation. The Government will find this out.

I started off by trying to explain what is the difference between these various sector in the commercial community. The agent is appointed after all sorts of checks by the manufacturer in whatever country he may be. The agent's job is to endeavor to sell the goods manufactured by the manufacturer whom he represented. He is kept on his toes because the goods that he sells are probably manufactured by several dozen similar manufacturers in other parts of the world. You will find that the agents go around, they offer their goods, they study the shipping opportunities.

Apparently nobody realizes the importance of this, particularly in perishables. The hon. Minister of Trade mentioned yesterday the high price of potatoes at 62 shillings a bag. Any reputable agent in Water Street who sells potatoes would tell him that if you wait until now to buy you will have to pay that price. What the Minister did not know is that he would have had to buy potatoes 6 or 8 weeks ago and it would have been cheaper to put them in cold storage rather than buy when the crop is at an end or when the crop is new and so much in demand. He will find that over the next two months potatoes will drop as much as 2, 3, 4 or 5 shillings a week until they come right down to 25 shillings a bag again in July or August.

The Minister did not know this some time ago and the people who are buying for him are now Government servants. They know about this but they are taking the line at least resistance.

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What does it matter? They have the invoice, they have the prices. They say, "What can we do about it?" One would have believed that the persons employed at the Bureau would have advised them realistically because they were commercial men.

The Government, unlike Britain and other countries, thought that I would be a good thing to mix politics with business and decided that because the Portuguese are vicious in their policies in Africa it is in the interest of the citizens of Guyana to ban imports from Portugal. Speaking for myself, I am not interested in banning imports from any country where the buying is good.

It is the duty of the Government to buy where the prices are good. The members of the Government have said so themselves, nevertheless they have allowed political implications to enter. Their advisers would have been able to tell them that for three months of the year one can get potatoes only from Portugal and its dependencies, Madeira and other places in the Azores, otherwise the price is double. Their prices are high but they can only sell for two months, that is, during April and May and possible for a short time in June. Why? Because the Canadian crop does not come in until sometime in July. During the vacuum one has to buy from Portugal unless one is going to pay double the price for old crop potatoes which, possible, cannot be had because of demand and supply. That is the position now.

No person other than one who is trying to falsify the position, because he was not allowed to do as he likes, would buy potatoes at 62 shillings a bag. The merchants are buying at this price because they cannot buy from Portugal. If they could buy from Portugal the astronomical price of 62 shillings would never have been entertained.

The External Trade Bureau will find out that the only way that it can effectively keep the price of goods shown is to see that they are in good supply and to make as wide as possible the markets from which it gets offers.

Jamaica is also controlling, but what has Jamaica done? She realized that eliminating the agents who have become experts in researching the world to find goods would serve no purpose. For example, you will find that for only three weeks – if you know the three weeks – you will bring an item like garlic from Formose which will sell cheaper than garlic from just around the corner. This again is because of demand and supply. If you do not buy during those three weeks and you buy at any other time the price of garlic from Formosa will be double the normal price and it will not be sensible to buy it.

What has Jamaica done? She has allowed the agents to operate because the saving you will make will be thrown away, the reason being that you cannot, overnight, learn all the factors in the marketing of the goods that you handle as each sector requires its own expertise. You will find food agents hardware agents, machinery agents, who have had to spend years before they knew all the factors and all the angels.

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There are now 10 and 11 people operating. I am quoting the Minister of Trade. I asked him the last time how many offers he gets before he buys. If it is now 200 I shall be glad to know. Do you know that the buyer in Water Street gets 50, 60, 70 offers put before him in one day and he has the ability to choose?

Mr. Speaker: Time!

Mr. Hamid: I beg to move that the honour Member be given 15 minutes to continue his speech.

Mrs. Sahoye *seconded*

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Sutton: Now sir, I know exactly how difficult it is to even make an impression on the thinking of the Government's policies which it has set its heart to but as I said before in this House, the only "ism" I am interested in is Guyanism which I believe in the end is going to be a combination of the various "ism," the best of each of them, and anything that, in my considered view, is not in the interest of the country I will always say so just as I have always said what I considered to be of interest in the policies adumbrated by the Government.

We come to the question of public corporations as set out in this lovely document. As I said before it is very difficult for anybody to criticize this document for what is actually sets out. If persons, here or elsewhere, scratch under the surface and can stand what they find there without fainting, they are very good.

The Government says on page 10 of the President's Address:

"Public Corporations represent a vital area of the expanding public sector. With a view to ensuring the responsiveness of these bodies to the national objectives and to improving their efficiency and accountability, legislation will be introduced early in this Session establishing a national holding Corporation as a central co-ordinating, planning and, in financial matters, controlling agency. This Corporation will also be responsible for holding Government's equity in those under takings in which Government participates with the private sector."

Now you will notice here, sir, in talking about public corporations, the Government must, and it always should, if it means what it says, place emphasis, on accountability. In other words, this means that it must always be perfectly satisfied that the funds have been used to the best advantage and that the principles as laid down will be carried out. But, Mr. Speaker, what is really the cause of these cancers all over the place? How can you hope to get Government corporations and other Government institutions functioning properly when the Government itself shows no respect for the laws in the Constitution which it has created. It allowed the Electoral Commission, which it created under a clause of the Constitution, to be raped and prostituted in the interest of the party. How can you expect people not to accept the view: "Boy I get a chance;

if the Government can rig um I can tek some too.” Example is better than precept; and if the Government does not clean up its own backyard, if the Government does not take steps to have the body politic purged from rigging and bad elections, how do you expect to have any opinion that you can properly interpret?

The members of this Government, let us say as all human beings do, will get away with murder when the can and as such have found themselves in power although the time of election they were a minority Government elected by fraud.

Let us start from here. Members of the Government I should say, “Okay, we got this but we did not realize that it was such a rotten thing, we will govern so impartially that by the time our term of office is up the people will see that we did this in their own interest, we will govern so well that we have no doubt that they will elect us again; they will not have to accuse us of rigging again.” But do we find that? No.

The Government will find out that except it sets the example from the top, except it reconstitutes, re-arranges and re-edit properly the electoral list and unless it allows the Commission to function as it was intended to function, that is, independent of Government and political interference, it will be flogging a dead horse. How can it expect people to show principle when the members of the Government have no principle themselves. Unless the Government truly reflects the feelings of the people and the country it will never succeed. This Government has a wonderful opportunity, if the Members dare put their lives in the balance, to arrange fair elections, see that the Commission is properly constituted, re-edit the electoral roll and then govern in such a manner as to induce the people who are against them to vote for them. Then it will be going something and history will say “Well you know they made a mistake but it correct itself.” The members of the Government will end up in a way which will cause the people of the country to thank them.

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I invite the Government to think seriously along these lines. Except it truly represents the wishes of the body politics it is bound to fail, the members of the Government know it, we know it, everybody knows. I wonder whether it has it in mind to correct that state of affairs.

I will invite the Government to try to keep more closely to what it says it will do; principles will not matter. Everybody will be given an opportunity, as long as he is a citizen of Guyana. If he intends to live honestly and to do the right thing he should not have to depend upon his political persuasion because as a citizen he has a right to live in this country and get employment here.

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Let us stop talking about, "Except I have a party card, except I do this" people do it but deep down inside they hate their guts for it, because unless they do that, they will never be able to improve their position in this country. We hope when we leave this country we can look everybody in the eye and be proud of our Government, notwithstanding we are not of the party, rather than have to make a lot of excuses for so many rascally action.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member Mr. Hamid

Mr. Hamid: Mr. Speaker, when I was presented with the President's Address, I was in fact a bit amused. In the past so much has been said in these brochures that the people must understand that there were quite a lot of promises peddled in the past that could not mature. As I opened the Address, on the first page, in the first paragraph, I was confronted with a statement that refers directly to you, Mr. Speaker "You have taken over at an important time in the growth of the Co-operative Republic ..."

One should realize that what is said here is rather misleading because, as I remember it, sir, you came at a time when our country was in turmoil, when there was a lot of corruption, and

when discrimination was rampant. In fact, you came at a time when history was created in the country. We say it in the rigged elections both at the central government level and at the local government level.

We saw the PNC stronghold in the Linden areas, where they taught the people how to rig elections, turn against the Government. We saw, during your brief term of office, where the hon. Minister of Local Government (Mr. Mingo) and the hon. Minister of Labour and Social Security (Mr. Carrington) went up there to settle some industrial dispute, and they had to run helter-skelter out of Demba. This was not all. During this period, the Minister of works, Hydraulics and Supply, Mr. Hamilton Green, another Minister, Mr. Jack, and our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Ptolemy Reid, also went up there. They went up there but they were quite different. They had a whole battalion of the G.D.F. to pave the way for them, and they went at the wee-wee hours of the morning, like thieves in the night; they could not find it possible to go during the early morning or at a particular time to meet the workers. They sneaked in there and as fast as they sneaked in, they were thrown out of their stronghold.

These are significant events, sir, during your short tenure of office as Speaker. The hon. Prime Minister was asked to go up there. The workers were pressing him to go but he failed to go at an appropriate time so the people gave him an ultimatum, to be there at a specific time. The reason they gave for wanting to see him was that they wished to be fully apprised of the RILA Plan and the Tyndall Report, but the Prime Minister, instead of going there, saw fit to order the guns and gas to be used there, in his very stronghold.

The deposed Minister of Agriculture, the hon. Member Mr. Jordan, was a very fiery politician in that area. It was claimed he was like the Angel Gabriel, fire was coming through his mouth, his nostrils, and his ears. Today, we have to look in this House to see which seat he occupies, and as we look across there, we see him sitting humbly as a member of the party. Instead of being the Angel Gabriel, they took paint and painted him black.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. member, please keep your speech within the confines of the Standing Orders and Rules and so not make unnecessary and Uncomplimentary remarks about the Prime Minister and other Members of the House.

Mr. Hamid: As we turn to page 2, we see the step that has been taken in relation to the bauxite industry. We saw where the workers were fed up with a Government which they put in office by rigging and other means; we say where the workers were conscious of the Government's broken promises, its discriminatory practices and corruption, and the workers showed their hands fully.

While I am on my feet, may I turn to page 5, Infra-structural Development. After introducing local government reforms, the Government charged the local authorities concerned exorbitant rates and taxes for drainage and irrigation. In many respects we say deplorable conditions in schemes. There were many serious reports of flooding and damage to livestock. The plans for drainage and irrigation in schemes were forestalled. Money which was voted was not properly spent, and in fact, people were complaining. Canals were all silted up, bush was growing in the canals; it was difficult at times for people transporting their produce from their farms to the marketing centre. The hon. Minister of Agriculture is trying to lay special emphasis on agricultural production but unless there is proper drainage and irrigation, nothing can be produced. It will therefore be difficult to achieve what it wishes to realize.

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What about the Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary Scheme? This project was surveyed, all the plans are there; it is only a matter of getting the necessary funds to have it implemented. To this extent it will drain and irrigate over 250,000 acres of land. If the Minister of Agriculture is doing what he is supposed to do, then surely he will see to it that the Ministry concerned will have this plan implemented as early as possible.

While on infrastructural work I wish to raise a point on electrification. But before doing so let me go back to page 5 of the speech by the President. In the sixth paragraph it is stated:

“The Corentyne Highway, reconstruction of which commenced in 1969, will be completed this year.”

This is nice to say, but I may wish now to go back to another Address made by the President on the 31st March, 1970:

“The West Demerara Roads will be rehabilitated this year and the Corentyne Road completed.”

This was told to us on the 31st March, 1970. Today, the Government is telling us the same thing again. It is trying to confuse the people with promises and broken promises. Here it says, that the Corentyne Highway, reconstruction of which commenced in 1969, will be completed this year. It is no use making a statement like this one year and repeating the same statement the following year. It shows that the Government is apparently not certain about what it is doing. It seems as if it is only making statements to confuse the general public. We want something more permanent. When it says something it must mean it.

I could continue and show another point. In the last paragraph of the same page 5 it is stated:

“Conscious of the need for an efficient, safe and dependable potable water supply throughout the country, my Government will, during this Session, establish a National Water Authority...”

This is what it is doing. It is changing its mouth. In 1970 it talked about a National Water Board; it has not done a thing and now in 1971 it is telling us that it will have a Water Authority. This Government is just using words to fool people. It told us in 1970 that, “during this Session legislation will be submitted to this House for the establishment of a National Water Board.”

This year it has brought the same statement but it has twisted it a little by tell is that a National Water Authority will established by virtue of legislation. Last year, nothing was done and this year it has brought another copy telling us what was said last year telling us exactly the same thing all over again. This is not getting us anywhere. The Government must understand what it is doing.

Last year the Government said a lot about electricity and this year we have not heard anything about this. If electricity expansion must be done, this is the time in which it should be done because the Government is now nationalizing the Demerara Bauxite Company which will now have to utilise a lot of electricity. If the company must use smelters surely the necessary steps will have to be implemented so that it will have hydro-electricity.

In this respect nothing at all was said. The amount of electricity used in the entire country is in the vicinity of 292 million kilowatt hours per year. This gives an average about 350 kilowatt hours per caput which is somewhat below the average for Latin America. Moreover, approximately 80 million kilowatt hours per year are consumed by the bauxite industry and an even greater amount by the 11 sugar estates and three rice mills in the country leaving an even smaller per caput electricity consumed. The Guyana Electricity Corporation, which is the largest supplier of electricity in the country, usually generates approximately about 134 million kilowatt hours of electricity per year.

If, according to what the Minister is saying, the country is about to have industrial development then surely the emphasis must be laid on hydro-electricity. It is no sense standing on the platform at the Public Buildings and telling the people that we have selected sites for hydropower when in fact no approval was given. They told us first of Tumatumari and then they told us of a place known as Tiger Creek in the Demerara River where it is felt that power can be generated. Then suddenly we heard about the Tiboku project in the Mazaruni River. It is estimated that this project will generate approximately 250 megawatts of power if implemented. And surely in the bauxite industry where the Government intends to use smelters for the purpose

of transforming alumina to aluminium, it is necessary that a speedy approach be made in this direction. I do hope that the Minister concerned will take quite a serious view of this matter, because it is no sense talking about nationalising the industry. It is no sense telling the people that Guyana is moving forward to the Co-operative Republic and the things that are necessary are not implemented.

One would have hoped today in this President's Address that some statement be made of the project concerning hydro-electricity because it will be utilized not only for the bauxite industry. It can be utilized in the rice and agricultural industries. Only yesterday I was reading in a newspapers how electricity can be used. I saw an article in the Mirror which stated that athletes will be able to use electricity to build their muscles.

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We see that electricity is also being used in the agricultural sector to get better production. Electricity is a need, and if the Government intends to do what it says, I would expect to see a programme at Tiboku implemented as speedily as possible.

Mr. Bholu Persaud: Mr. Speaker, our nation, time after time, has had an opportunity to record empty speeches and, as a result, the nation is so hardened to these speeches that they no longer make any impact on the minds of the people.

Much emphasis has been placed in the President's Address on agriculture and I want to discuss a few points because, as we were told and we all know, agriculture is the backbone of the economy of our country. The President said at paragraph I on page 3:

“For this year, the major thrust will continue to be the bringing about of diversification in the agricultural life of the country where we aim to achieve a higher

degree of import substitution, create more opportunities for employment through agriculture and lay the basis for industry based on agriculture.”

If one should study this paragraph very carefully, one would recall that speeches like this one were made on several occasions. Who can deny that when the PPP was in office it emphasized and made efforts to diversify the agricultural sector? I would just like to call your attention to the Mara Land Development Scheme which is totally abandoned.

This land development scheme was started during the PPP regime for the same purpose. This is only one of the schemes. We are now talking about a Co-operative Republic, we are talking about diversification of crops. The speech mentions employment through agriculture, and this is one of the schemes which would have provided employment, diversification, and co-operation. This scheme is totally abandoned but although it is totally abandoned, Government last year estimated to spend \$90,000 on it. We still have officers administering the affairs, drainage and irrigation, etc. Also, in the Estimates it is hoped to collect \$20,000 as revenue, rents, etc. The speech mentions that we are trying to create jobs through the agricultural sector and co-operatives.

The first place in Mara in Ma Retraite, which could have accommodated 51 families, with 15 acres being worked as a co-operative and with 2 to 2½ acres as a homestead. Houses were built for them but if one should go to Ma Retraite, one would find that out of 51, 41 families have left and only 10 remain. The co-operative section at Brandwagt-Sari – the 15 acre plots on which the residents would have worked – is totally abandoned; nothing is done. I hope the Minister of Agriculture will note this and find out what is going on in this part of the country.

There is another scheme, New Ma Retraite. Fifteen families were to live there doing the same thing, diversification of crops. But the same thing happened. There was no incentive, all 15 families have left. No one is living there now. A little further there is another village, L'Enterprise. This village should have been the research centre for the diversification of crops in

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this scheme. This is totally abandoned. Scape Need South is another area with 26 families, 15 acres of land each 2½ acres for homesteads. The land would have accommodated them in a similar type of diversification of crops. This is out of order. Everybody has left. Scape Need North. Out of 7 families, none is living there now. They were supposed to grow permanent crops. In another scheme, Vryburg, there are 14 families. Maybe, the former Minister of Agriculture will know this. Fourteen families were supposed to live there, with 15 acres of land each, doing diversification of crops.

Then we come to Mara scheme itself. This scheme was supposed to accommodate 62 families with 15 acres in rice and 2 ½ acres homestead. Out of 62 families, there remain only 7. The scheme after that, Brandwagt Sari, should have had 82 settlers. We are now talking about cattle rearing. This scheme should have been involved in cattle rearing and citrus, but all the 82 families have left, apart from three foreigners, Americans, whom the PNC sent to live there. They themselves cannot cope with the situation.

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If the Minister of Agriculture is serious and if the Government is serious in the President's Address then I feel it should carry out investigations. If it is being misled by its officers then I feel that there should be personal investigations. We have changed to a Co-operative Republic. What incentives have been given to the co-operatives? These are all co-operatives. Not only at Brandwagt Sari and the Mara land Development Scheme but in many other areas the co-operatives which have been formed are all going down the drain.

On page 23 of the President's Address we find this:

“It is my Government's policy to plough back into the industry surplus funds earned from the marketing of rice. Accordingly, the Board has taken over from other Government Agencies a substantial share of the responsibility of providing loans to

farmers. Inputs, such as pure line sees, fertilisers, weedicides and insecticides, are supplied to them on credit....”

Ever since the P.N.C. Government has been in office we have been hearing about changes in the varieties grown. It has brought a number of experts time and again. The last one who is here now is Dr. Powar. His recommendations are not even being heeded by the Government. He has made research and has recommended a new variety. I am not talking about Blue Belle because we are not hearing anything about that now. When the Government introduced the Blue Belle, there was a lot of emphasis placed on it and they tried everything possible to get the farmers to plant Blue Belle, so much so that a former Minister of Health, Mr. Deeroop Mahraj, who was boasting about the Blue Belle in Essequibo is no longer planting it. The Government is now introducing the new variety Star Bonnet which is the order of the day. This is an American variety, and the farmers are being forced to plant it.

We agree that if the farmers will have a higher yield it will be better for them, and it will be better for the economy of the country because we would be able to produce more and export more. But what incentives are you creating for the farmers to plant it? Let the hon. Member, Mr. Janaraine Buhdoo, who happens to be a representative and expert on rice for the Upper Corentyne, tell us whether he is planting it although he is using threats and tell the people in Black Bush Polder that if they do not plant Star Bonnet they will lose. I think that this hon. Gentleman is perhaps fooling not only himself but his colleagues because he himself has not been planting the variety which the Government is boasting so much about. The Government is experimenting at the farmers' expense. The farmers are taken to the plot but when reaping time is on, they are not taken to the plot. One Dr. Fraser at No. 19 Village had planted hundreds of acres and was able to reap only 11 bags per acre. They would not invite the farmers to demonstrate what method should be used. Last week the hon. Minister invited the farmers to seminar; he used threats that if they did not do this, the Government would not buy their rice. I do not know how you are going to get the farmers to agree with you.

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The Black Bush settlers became the scape goats up to now political vendetta is used on these people; police are using political vendetta. The Bank of Guyana Report for last year is not wrong because according to the Report our production has gone down. Our export on the West Indian market has proved that there has been a drop. With all the threats there has been a drop in our rice production. Our export in 1968 was \$26,246,983; in 1969, \$19,669,918, a drop of \$6,477,065; in 1970, \$18,281,519, a drop of \$1,388,399. Are we making any progress? We are losing at the expense of the farmers, we are losing year after year because of inexperienced personnel.

Dr. Power has made personal investigations and has come up with a new variety called Hybrid. The Minister of Agriculture will perhaps make note and try to investigate this. The Hybrid variety has come about after crossing IR8 with 79. It is said that the IR8 was a white belly rice; it was not good because it gives water when you cook it. So Dr. Powar crossed it and called it Hybrid. As a matter of fact a man by the name of Jaianarain Sawh has reaped thirty-one bags per acre this spring crop from the same Hybrid.

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Let them tell us about the new variety, where they have reaped it and what are the expenses involved. Why do they not ask their friends, the hon. Members, to plat it? Why not force them? It is because of a personal vendetta for the Black Bush settlers? The hon. minister was there this weekend; farmers protested, "We cannot go into the variety this year. Give us a chance and show us how to plant it; we may try and plant it next year, or if not, well, you stand the cost. We are giving you all the lands." The farmers told the hon. Minister to take all the lands and make all their experiments this year. There has been no answer up to now.

As I mentioned just now, this variety which they are launching now is an American variety. Dr. Powar recommended a variety which yielded thirty-one bags this spring crop but they are by-passing that and are going on the Star Bonnet. This is a think long grain which the

Jamaican market is asking for. The point is, if the Jamaican market is asking for this variety, then we must produce this to compete with the Americans. How can you compete with the American variety when you have to produce the same variety? I am wondering whether the Americans are closer friends to this Government or to the Jamaicans.

I have a strong feeling that there is some conspiracy to destroy the rice industry. Somebody is misleading the Minister. Maybe, when we come here next year we will have another Minister of Agriculture. The former Minister was not only talking about Blue Belle, he was talking about diversification, about a banana project, he was talking about Global-Agri. Next year we may come and see another Minister telling us about something new.

I have a 1957 Report of a Committee which was set up and which recommended a long grain. I will mention some of the names of the persons who sat on that Committee:

H.P. Bayley, then Manager of the Rice Marketing Board
R.B. Gajraj, then Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board
W. Roberts, General-Manager, Rice Development Company
T. Budhoo, General-Secretary, Rice Development Company
Deorooop Mahraj, President of the Rice Millers' Association
R.E. Davis, M.L.C., Vice-President, Rice Millers' Association
W.G. Carmichael, General Manager, B.G. Credit Corporation.
A.F. Camacho, Acting Director of Drainage and Irrigation
W.A. Macnie, C.M.G., O.B.E., Director of Land Settlement
J.I. Fraser, Acting Commissioner for Co-operative Development
J.A. D'Oliviera, Secretary, and
the hon. Dr. C.B. Jagan, who was then Minister of Trade and Industry.

Page 3 of the Report states:

“Varieties 85/42, 52/37 and D110 would now be classified for size as extra long, and for shape as slender. A concise and precise definition is thus as extra long slender rice. The variety No. 79 is classified for size as long and for shape as medium i.e., it is a

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long medium rice. This new classification is based to some extent on the old system long used in Burma which provided a fairly good definition of rice by size and shape. The long medium rice by the new classification would be of the same type as the Burma ordinary long grain types which are sold on the world markets.”

This recommendation is in relation to a type of rice similar to the type which the farmers are planting. All the Government is saying is that the West Indian market needs long grain rice.

The President's Address also states at page 3: “Research and educational activities will continue to be strenuously pursued to raise the level of productivity of the industry and farmers organized to promote the development of the industry through District Action Committees.”

6.15 p.m.

I just want to mention a few points on this question of District Action Committee, because it is a big scandal in the rice industry. If the Minister is serious, then he ought to investigate these committees' handling of the rice farmers' money. This is not money from the Treasury; this is money which has been realized as a result of cutting down the prices paid to farmers for rice and padi. District Action Committees were set up to help the farmers. As far as we were told in the Corentyne also over \$1 million was given out. Let the hon. Minister tell us how much out of this we have collected. They have given out loans to their friends and families. Some who received loans have purchased cars and painted their houses. Two men are paid to collect these debts. Some of them are getting 2½ per cent.

Mr. Speaker: Time!

Mr. Ram Karran: I beg to move that the hon. Member be given an extension of time.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, please continue.

Mr. Bholu Persaud: I just want to wind up by mentioning some of the areas which were given these loans and how much was given. In 1969, from the East Bank, Berbice, Hog Sty – and I wish the hon. Minister to take note of this if he does not have a record – we have given out \$119,277. From Adventure to Crabwood Creek, \$200,000. In the Black Bush Polder \$90,000. The total amount for 1969 was \$409,277. For 1970 the Committee was changed – new friends, new comrades, more loans. They have reduced the areas now. East Bank Canje to Palmyra, \$41,422. Seawell to Jones, Port Mourant, \$36,679.49. Whim Office alone, \$60,769.67. One of their friends, a man interested in horse racing, was in the Action Committee, [**Mr. Green:** “Who was the man?”] A Rahaman. He alone collected \$40,000. Seedlings, insecticides, and weedicides, \$167,930. Investigate the statement that these loans were not given to the right farmers and let the Parliament know how much was given out in loans and how much has been collected. But you have placed the wrong persons on these Committees and they have given the money to their friends and families. Who are the losers? Farmers.

Where the rice industry is concerned, I am in sympathy maybe with the Minister because apparently, as I have said before, he is being misled by his advisers. This is why I want to wage very strongly that a committee be set up to investigate the rice industry as a whole and the spending of the rice farmers' money.

The Minister of Labour and Social Security (Mr. Carrington): Mr. Speaker, I was absent when the hon. Member Mr. Harry was making reference to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. The hon. Member Mr. Sutton also mentioned that the Ministry of Labour did not send a delegation to the I.L.O. This Government and the Ministry of Labour, as everyone knows, are doing everything possible to improve the conditions of workers in Guyana. In 1964 the previous Government, in a hurry to make people believe that it was doing a great deal for the workers, erected a statue in this compound resembling the man Critchlow. This Government's intention is not to fool the workers, but to do something tangible for them.

At the time when I was absent I was in another place looking after the interest of workers. The Guyana Government is not sending a delegation to the I.L.O. this year not only because of financial considerations but because we set out to improve the representation of the Caribbean countries at the I.L.O. When Guyana became independent, we were one of the countries which said that attending the I.L.O. conferences is too costly for the undeveloped Caribbean countries and we set out from time to time to make recommendations to reduce the cost of sending delegations to the I.L.O. We have spearheaded discussions in this respect.

Outside of the question of having co-ordination between the Caribbean countries on I.L.O. matters we have been most consistent in our attendance at these conferences. We attended the Conferences in Geneva; we attended the Regional Conferences in Washington and in Caracas, Venezuela. This proves, Mr. Speaker, our interest in these matters affecting the workers. We have proof in this respect for the records of the I.L.O. will show that the Guyana delegation has at all times been making a contribution in the interest of the organisation and the delegation which we represent.

6.25 p.m.

The Hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall made reference to a number of matters which really did not appear in the Presidential Address. You would agree, Mr. Speaker, that if we should take all the Ministries and embody all their programmes in the President's Address, we would have to spend almost a week discussing the various Ministries.

In 1969, the then Throne Speech made reference to a few matters touching the Ministry of Labour. One of these was the national Insurance Scheme, another was the question of workers' participation and yet another was the Trade Disputes Bill. Because of legislative priorities and the extent of work at the Attorney-General's Office, we must consider legislation which is of major importance to the country. For instance, the nationalisation of DEMBA I

would consider very important to the nation, so there was need for a priority there. For this reason, we had to forego other legislation in the interest of the workers.

The hon. Member made reference to the question of severance pay. These are more or less orders, and they are now before the legal draughtsmen. In an effort to relieve the workers of some of these matters and to bring legislation up to date in the Ministry of Labour, approval has been granted for the appointment of a legal adviser in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. It is just a question of time within which to have this person installed so that we can go ahead with the necessary legislation.

It is a fact known to most trade unionists that the Ministry of labour has had some changes; Today, we have in the Ministry of Labour improvement in the section in respect of safety, health and welfare. We have appointed additional officers. Where it was known previously that we had one officer, today, we have four such officers.

As you will remember, too, in the Speech from the Throne in 1969, the Government said that one of its policies was workers' participation in industry. This is known to be the Year of Consolidation and what we need to do is to implement many of the things we said we would do.

One question of workers' participation the Government stated is policy in 1969 and we are now implementing this policy. The workers' representative at DEMBA will be elected and will sit on the Board. This is a form of worker participation at the highest level. I am sure that hon. members know that on various boards and corporations the workers' representatives are selected and appointed by the TUC to such boards. There is also planned a policy of worker participation at a lower level by way of joint consultation. This is to be done by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

On the question of other legislation to which the hon. Member made reference, I assure him that within the shortest possible time, during this very year, before this Session is through,

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there will be such legislation coming forward, but I want to take this opportunity to make reference to other things we are doing in the Ministry of Labour in the interest of the workers. For instance, there is a manpower division.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is now 6.30 p.m., and as the hon. Minister is now moving on to a new topic, perhaps we may consider whether we may adjourn.

Mr. Ramsaroop: I think the Minister will continue tomorrow. At this stage, I will ask that the House adjourned to Friday, 21st May, 1971 at 2 p.m.
