

**THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

OFFICIAL REPORT

[VOLUME 6]

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

7th Sitting

2.00 p.m.

Thursday, 30th November, 1972

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Speaker

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

Members of the Government

People's National Congress

Elected Ministers

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

(Absent – on leave)

Dr. The Hon. P.A. Reid,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National
Development and Agriculture

(Absent – on leave)

The Hon. M. Kasim, A.A.,
Minister of State of Agriculture

The Hon. H.D. Hoyte, S.C.,
Minister of Works and Communications

(Absent – on leave)

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

The Hon. Miss S.M. Field-Ridley,
Minister of Information, Culture and Youth

The Hon. B. Ramsaroop, **(Absent – on leave)**
Minister without Portfolio and Leader of the House

The Hon. D.A. Singh, **(Absent – on leave)**
Minister of Health

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

The Hon. C.V. Mingo,
Minister of State for the Public Service

The Hon. W. Haynes, **(Absent – on leave)**
Minister of Co-operatives and Community Development

The Hon. A. Salim,
Minister of Local Government

Appointed Ministers

The Hon. S.S. Ramphal, S.C., **(Absent)**
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Attorney-General

The Hon. H. Green, **(Absent)**
Minister of Public Affairs

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

The Hon. Miss C.L. Baird, **(Absent)**
Minister of Education

The Hon. F.E. Hope,
Minister of Finance and Trade

Dr. the Hon. K.F.S. King, **(Absent)**
Minister of Economic Development

The Hon. S.S. Naraine, A.A.,
Minister of Housing and Reconstruction

(Absent – on leave)

Parliamentary Secretaries

Mr. J.G. Joaqin, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Minister of Finance
and Trade

Mr. P. Duncan, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Minister of Information,
Culture and Youth

Mr. J.R. Thomas,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Information
Culture and Youth

Mr. C.F. Wrights, J.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Works and
Communications

Other Members

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

(Absent)

Members of the Opposition

People's Progressive Party

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

Mr. Ram Karran
Mr. R. Chandisingh (Absent – on leave)
Dr. F.H.W. Ramsahoye, S.C.
Mr. D.C. Jagan, J.P., Deputy Speaker
Mr. E.M.G. Wilson (Absent – on leave)
Mr. A.M. 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 – on leave)
Mr. R. Ally
Mr. Balchand Persaud
Mr. Bholu Persaud
Mr. I.R. Remington, J.P. (Absent)
Mr. L.A. Durant
Mr. V. Teekah

United Force

Mr. M.F. Singh (Absent)
Mrs. E. DaSilva
Mr. J.A. Sutton

Independent

Mr. R.E. Cheeks (Absent)
Mr. E.L. Ambrose
Mrs. L.M. Branco

Officers

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

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

The National Assembly met at 2 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair.]

Prayers

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**Leave to Members**

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted to the hon. Member Mr. Ramsaroop from 30th November to 14th December, 1972 and to the hon. Members Mr. D.A. Singh, Miss Baird, Mr. S.S. Naraine and Mr. Stoby for today's sitting.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Papers were laid:

- (1) Petroleum (Prospecting and Winning) (Amendment) Regulations 1972 (No. 25), made under section 4(1) of the Petroleum Ordinance, Chapter 199, on 17th November, 1972 and published in the Gazette on 25th November, 1972. [*The Minister of Mines and Forest*]
- (2) Report of the Public Accounts Committee of the National Assembly of Guyana on the Accounts of the Country for the years 1962 to 1965 and the Reports of the Director of Audit thereon. [*Mr. Ram Karran, Chairman, Public Accounts Committee*]

2.05 p.m.

PUBLIC BUSINESS**BILL – SECOND READING****LOCAL AUTHORITIES (POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS) BILL**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to provide for the postponement of elections of councillors of local authorities and for purposes connected therewith.”

The Minister of Home Affairs (Mr. Clarke): Mr. Speaker, in moving the Second Reading of this Local Authorities (Postponement of Elections) Bill, I think it is important for me to observe that the request for the postponement of the Local Authorities Elections came from the local authorities themselves and it was not a question of the Government forcing the local authorities to make such a request. I say that because since the question of the postponement of Local Government elections hit the headlines, there has been a great deal of comment, and while some of this comment has tended to be responsible, some of it has definitely been irresponsible and some of it has been unobjective.

We do not quarrel with those who merely want to oppose for political reasons the legislation now before the House because, sir, as politicians, we expect that certain postures will be taken but I think that when we examine the facts of the situation and when we look at the position which faces the local authorities throughout the country, we can come to no other decision but the decision which the Government came to after considering the request from the local authorities. My colleague, the hon. Minister of Local Government, will deal with, during the course of this debate, the arguments which were put forward by the local authorities, which arguments convinced the Government as to the necessity for this step to be taken.

I should like merely to urge that the local government reform programme came into being as a result of legislation passed by this Government in 1969 and which came as a result of an investigation and study which was done by Dr. Marshall, the Report of which was published some time in May 1955. May 1955, Mr. Speaker, does not say very much for those who, now speaking from a political position of weakness, seek to attack this Government for postponing the elections. The position is that the P.P.P. Opposition particularly has had many years to consider and to decide on these reforms but even though it had Dr. Marshall's Report since 1955, and more particularly during its term of office between 1957 to 1964, it did nothing to implement those reforms.

Perhaps it might be opposite to remark that the reason the Opposition did nothing to implement the reforms is because it found that the implementation of those reforms would have imposed certain difficulties. In spite of the fact that we appreciate that there are difficulties in the way of the implementation of those reforms, it was this Government in 1969 which promulgated legislation in this House and proceeded in 1970 to hold local government elections after a lapse of many years.

The reforms in the local government system envisage a great number of changes. For instance, the new local authorities have become larger and they carry a great number of additional responsibilities which hitherto were not part of the local government system in Guyana. Even the older local authorities and the older municipalities were enlarged and very large areas were brought in as part of those existing local authorities.

Take Georgetown, for instance. Georgetown, as we all know, was extended to include a large area along the East Bank of Demerara as well as all the new housing estate areas which have sprung up in the east and in the north east of the city. Even now, the Greater Georgetown municipality is finding difficulty in really taking positive control and making the administration effectively felt in the newer areas which have come under its control since the reforms in the system were introduced. I mention Georgetown because Georgetown is one of the oldest municipalities in the country and because Georgetown is expected to have and indeed does have the greater expertise and better trained personnel in the area of local government, at least, much better trained and much more expert than one would find in the newer towns like Linden, Corriverton, and Rose Hall.

2.15 p.m.

And if Georgetown is finding it difficult, then I am sure that for the new local authorities it must be even more difficult. Therefore, what we are doing today is possibly something which, had the Opposition been in our place they may have themselves found it necessary to do.

I may mention that the Local Authorities Elections Act of 1969 and the Municipal and Districts Council Act of the same year envisage that the local government units will be in office for three years and not for two years as is the case now. It was perhaps ill-advised on the part of Government when these reforms were implemented to have limited the first term to two years. But certainly any government that is worth its salt ought to be able to correct a situation when it discovers that such a situation exists; and this Government has found it necessary in the light of the representations made by the local authorities to reconsider its decision and to give the local authorities more time to grapple with the many problems which confront them.

The Bill itself is set in three parts. Part II of the Bill deals with the postponement, and makes provision for the present councillors to continue in office after 7th December. Part II also makes provision for the filling of casual vacancies to take place in accordance with section 103 of the Local Authorities Elections Act, 1969. And also, there is provision in Part II for the election of Mayors and Deputy Mayors, Chairmen and vice Chairmen and deputy Chairmen to continue as provided for in the Act.

Part III of the Bill makes provision for the Minister responsible for elections to make an Order some time before October 31, 1974 specifying the date on which elections will be held. If no Order is made before 31st October, 1974; provision is made for the Minister to make an Order to allow the Councillors who are serving at that date to continue to serve until elections are held pursuant to the Principal Ordinance, that is, the Local Authorities Elections Act, 1969.

In fact, it is a simple bit of legislation which is intended merely to allow the existing local authorities to continue in force for another two years at the most but giving the Minister responsible for elections the responsibility of making an Order specifying the date on which these elections might be held.

In sum, this is the import of the legislation before the House. I know my hon. Friends on the other side are going to introduce during the course of this debate a number of extraneous

matters and I am sure this House at the end of this debate is going to be of my view. I move the Second Reading of this Bill.

Question proposed.

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

Mr. Ram Karran: It is a great pity that the hon. Minister in introducing this Bill did not deal with the matter, he did not tell us why it is so important that these elections should be postponed. He has, of course, found it convenient already to bring in what he calls extraneous matters. The whole fact of the matter is that the Bill itself is extraneous, the Bill is unnecessary and irrelevant to our development at this time. He need not have said anything at all. The Explanatory Memorandum of the Bill says more than the hon. Minister has said, that it is in the interest of the administration of the respective local authorities that serving councillors should be permitted to continue. Continue when? Until possibly to the end of 1974. The reason he said is because they have not been in office for long. Surely, the Government in enacting legislation and in holding Local Government Elections would have known at the time when that legislation was passed and at the time when these councillors were elected there would have been a short Parliament. And for the Government to come now at this very late hour to tell us that we must pass this measure sounds very unreasonable. What is most unreasonable is, the Minister told us that the local authorities have made representations for them to postpone elections, when, if we all recall G.A.L.A., that association which was stolen by the P.N.C. from the stalwarts of the local government in this country – Llewelyn John – I called his name the other day; he is on the parapet of obscurity.

2.25 p.m.

It was stolen from him and his group, who were really interested and devoted local government workers, to be handed over to the P.N.C. hacks, and G.A.L.A. came out hours before

Government's announcement that elections would be postponed, and all the other local authorities were caught with their pants down, Bartica, Corriverton and elsewhere. After the act was stated by the Government, then they said: yes, we too, support the postponement of local government elections.

Those are the facts, and for the hon. Minister to come here and mislead the House, to say that local authorities asked the Government, there has been no evidence nor has the hon. Minister presented any evidence to show that that was the case, unless certain influential individuals from the local authorities had spoken to the Minister and it is recorded on the file. The thing was not being properly prepared, as is customary with the Government and the P.N.C., and then this chorus of supporting voices arose after the announcement of the postponing of the elections.

If the hon. Minister had the facts. We are in sympathy with the Government when it is in difficulty, and if the Government had good reasons for postponing the elections, I give the assurance that my colleagues and I would not have withheld our votes or our support. But sir, did they not anticipate that this would have been a short local authority, why come back now and tell us they want an extension? Having regard to the stifling authoritarian administrations all over the country, having regard to the massive fraud which prevailed during these elections, and having regard to the very poor performance of the councillors all over the country including the Garden City of Georgetown, it would be in the best interest of Government, the local authorities, and the people who live in these local authorities, to put an end to these authoritarian regimes masquerading as local government in these parts.

The most eloquent support for our stand came from the mouths of the two hon. Ministers, the hon. Minister Mr. Mingo and the hon. Minister Mr. Salim who at various meetings of local authorities severely criticised the disinterest and absence of councillors from meetings. At one stage I thought one hon. Minister threatened to dismiss all of them in December, dispose of the services of those councillors who, he said, never attended meetings, had no interest, did not take part in any activities. This is the strongest support for our stand and unless my friends across

there are going to join the band of turncoats, to change their mouths at this late stage, I think they will have to get up and support the Opposition stand in opposing the Government's measure for the postponement of elections. They had very unsavoury things to say about local authorities and I am waiting – I would have preferred to sit and to hear the hon. Minister of Local Government Mr. Salim say what he had to say before I spoke, because I would have been extremely glad to have had an opportunity to speak after him, but that opportunity has been denied me. But my colleagues will take care of him. They are competent to do so when the time comes.

It is reported in the newspapers that these local authorities want an extension of their lives because they have not been able to grapple with the development programme. I live in one of the largest local authorities in the country, the premier local authority, if I may call it, and for them to talk about development programme would be flying in the face of fact, because the hon. Minister Mr. Mingo must know that there is no development programme. The only development programme I heard about is councillors are trying to develop themselves. They want to get salaries. They even had the temerity, one of them, to come to a P.P.P. councillor in New Amsterdam and to suggest to him that if he moved a Motion for payment of salaries to councillors, then the Government would acquiesce. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Ram Karran, are you addressing me?

Mr. Ram Karran: I beg your pardon, sir. They want to force the Government's hand to pay them salaries. They have not succeeded. They have only got part development. They got allowances to visit works in the local authority areas. I presume that they hope that the bankruptcy which prevails in Guyana and which hits hardest in the rural areas prevents the Government from dishing out more money to its supporters in the form of salaries to their local authority councillors. Perhaps they have been able to persuade the new Minister, I do not know -

Mr. Speaker: I thought if somebody is bankrupt, he does not have any money.

Mr. Ram Karran: Sir, we do not know what the Government has in mind. You know it springs surprises on this House. You yourself have been subject to these surprises.

Mr. Speaker: You said the Government is bankrupt, and then it is dishing out money.

Mr. Ram Karran: Loans are coming, sir. Had it not been in ordinary circumstances, notwithstanding all that I have related and all that is to come, had it not been for the fact that these local authorities have been elected on this heavy fraud, we might have been saying: all right let us give them a chance because they have got only two years.

Mr. Speaker: You have been dropping out the two qualifying words --

Mr. Ram Karran: Not yet. They are coming. I want to deal first with the question of registration. That is why I have not put in the other two words yet.

2.35 p.m.

Sir, as you will recall, the List of Electors in the Local Authorities was drawn from the List of Electors in the General Elections. In other words, the same Voters List for the General Elections was used for the Local Authorities in these areas. I want to develop the point to show that the List from which these names were drawn was fraudulent. This Voters List itself for the General Elections, had been extracted under very suspicious and fraudulent circumstances, while fraudulent charges were laid in this House in the Elections Commission and indeed all over the country.

I refer particularly to the General elections of 1968. You will recall, sir, that in early 1967 the P.P.P. discovered or uncovered the secret establishment of the P.N.C. dominated Registration Centre in Kingston. We saw barbed wire going around, we saw the old Education Department building renovated and we saw very suspicious movements of people going in and

out with armed sentry, not only at the gate but at all four corners of this building. This organisation began secretly to recruit persons whose job it was to carry out what we later to be compulsory registration of citizens age 14 and above. The National Registration Act supporting this action on the part of the Government was not passed until sometime much later. Even the United Force was taken off guard; even the United Force sitting with the Government did not know what was taking place.

It was from this List that persons over 21 years were extracted. In making this registration, the P.N.C. Government completely ignored and completely by-passed the provisions of the Guyana Constitution for the appointment of an Elections Commission. You will also recall that it was raised in this House and outside of this House that members of the Elections Commission challenged what was taking place there because it was felt and it was eventually proved to be true that the registration which was conducted by the Government which was conducted by one of the participants in the elections Government did not have the blessings of the Elections Commission with respect to the electors to vote at the General Elections. I said earlier that these same names on the General Register of Voters it was from this general register of voters that the names for the local authorities were extracted.

Proof has been in abundance to show that this List was false, that this List was fraudulent. But how did the Government which held the machinery for it all solved it? Before we arrive at that stage perhaps it might be relevant and important to recall what one member of the Elections Commission said when these names were challenged. When the P.P.P. representative on the Elections Commission observed that it appeared as if the General Registration List was going to be dumped on the Elections Commission the P.N.C. representative on the Commission who is now the hon. Minister for Works and Communications, Mr. Hoyte said this:

“The National Registration could not be the electoral roll. The compilation of the electoral roll was a matter for the Commission who shall exercise general direction and supervision over the registration of electors.

The Commission had nothing to do with the preparation of the National Register. Whatever might be the purpose of the Register it certainly could not be the electoral roll. Under the Constitution, the Commission alone was charged with the function of supervising the registration of electors. It followed, therefore, that the Register, not prepared under the general direction and supervision of the Commission, could not, I repeat, could not be a register of electors for the purpose of the Constitution.”

This is what he said. But what we had, in fact, was the opposite. Because the Government took the whole Register, as it was, padded with all the fraud, and my colleagues have always referred to the phantom votes, the underage, the dead, and the non-existent, all those names remain intact on the Voters List as a result, the Elections have been a violent fraud on the community.

I want to read a little more. Not only have we had this fraud on the perpetuated and one of the reasons we should hold elections now and change all these stop-gap councillors, but we should also examine the other question of the abuse of the electoral system. Many of these names were challenged. My friends across the Table will undoubtedly say, “Why didn’t you do that?” We did that, we challenged them. But what was the outcome? If you object to a name as not being real, you had to pay the sum of \$3. If you proved your case naturally your \$3 was returned. But what was the attitude of the presiding officer, the Magistrates? I recall in one case where around 400 names were found in one list, and the Magistrate wanted death certificates before he was willing to strike out the names. One person went and swore, “I attended the man’s funeral.” The magistrate said, “No”, but he wants the death certificate, and the man who objected lost his \$3.

The revision of the List was a very difficult exercise in so far as the P.P.P. or indeed any decent person was able to remove from the List the bogus names. I remember it was reported in one of the newspapers that my friend and colleague, the Minister of Labour actual assaulted one of the members of the P.P.P. in the Campbellville area.

The man is dead. The person made an objection that his name should be removed from the list. The Returning Officer agreed, but the hon. Minister went up and said: "The man ent dead, put back the name", and the cowering Returning Officer had to put back the name on the list. In New Amsterdam, another objector took 300 phantom names, people who never lived there, but the Magistrate came to the conclusion that he could not entertain any evidence by this particular activist of the People's Progressive Party, as a result of which, none of these claims were entertained and up to this day they remain on this list. It is for these reasons and other reasons that will be mentioned by my colleagues that we wish to take the stand that it is time that these people, who have been falsely holding office, by fraud, should terminate their activities and we should have free and fair elections without any rigging at all. I should like to tender this as evidence.

"Queenstown,
20.12.68

Dear Sister. Assalamoalikum. My family and I wish you and Haji Saheb a pleasant Eid. Kindly accept this present.

Your Brother
Abdul Salim.

(This is not Zakat.)

VOTE P.N.C."

This is the sort of thing we have in this country. *[Interruption]* My God, sir! An hon. Minister says there is nothing wrong with it. It is not Zakat. This is \$5. Vote for P.N.C. These are the people who sit on top and perform miracles which the hon. Minister finds nothing wrong with. Is there any wonder that the moral standard in this country has fallen to such low depths? They all seek to defend what is obviously a fraud. No wonder that you have to shoot 15 year olds as criminals, no wonder the morals have gone to the dogs. Even in the time of the colonialists, the standard was higher. At least they did their things in such a way that one could not see. But these hon. Members are so broken with their dishonest practices that they come and

tell us that an obvious fraud, practised on perhaps an innocent person, there is nothing wrong with it! No wonder that they want to come here today and to perpetrate this fraud of local government representatives who sit on the backs of the Guyanese people today, and which makes life so disgustingly stifling. It is time that we put an end to it.

Mrs. DaSilva: We heard from the hon. Minister of Home Affairs, when he was introducing the Bill, that Government decided to postpone the elections on the advice of the local authorities --

Mr. Speaker: He said, at the request of the local authorities.

Mrs. DaSilva: Yes, sir, at the request. The hon. Minister of Home Affairs said, at the request of the local authorities. Then we heard the hon. Minister of Local Government saying, "listen to what G.A.L.A. tell you", and that came from the lips of the hon. Minister of Local Government. I am going to say what G.A.L.A. told us. We in the United Force have always held, and it is reasonable to assume, as do all the citizens of Guyana, and we take it for granted, that persons elected to be leaders whether in Parliament, at the local authority level, in community development, or wherever leaders are, that these people are responsible and mature. I regret to say that we have made a mistake and, maybe, there are others like us who have also made a mistake, that we should have taken it for granted that leaders are responsible and mature people, because the President of G.A.L.A., Mr. Hulbert McGowan, stated in an article that appeared on Wednesday, November 29, in the Guyana Graphic, headed "Suspension is in national interest", and I quote from it:

"As President of G.A.L.A., I am anxious that local government units strive towards maturity so as to prepare themselves for the day when the central government would devolve more powers and responsibility upon them thus bringing them more meaningfully into the development process. With this objective in mind I would be failing the entire nation if I condoned evidence of irresponsibility and lack of a sense of dedication on the part of councillors."

He further goes on to say,

“... that at the administration level of many of the district councils the transition period found many of the officers willing but ill equipped to perform their duties satisfactorily.”

Here we have it from the lips of the President of G.A.L.A., Mr. Hulbert McGowan himself. The leaders of our local authorities are immature and irresponsible and they lack a sense of dedication. These are the persons that we in this House today are being asked to allow to continue in office for a period of time not later than 31st October, 1974. It leaves one to wonder if the Members of the P.N.C. central government themselves are not irresponsible, immature, and lacking in a sense of dedication, for the P.N.C. put the members in who are on the local authorities, put their names on the list. The P.N.C. was responsible for the list that was submitted for the Local Authorities Elections. The citizens of Guyana put their faith in the P.N.C. The members of the P.N.C. boasted that they swept the polls and that the people of Guyana want them to lead and they have been carrying on in accordance with the wishes of the people of Guyana.

2.55 p.m.

The people of Guyana trusted them, they had faith in their judgment. I wonder how they must feel when they read what Mr. McGowan has to say about the type of persons that they have representing them at the local authority level and these are the people who were put there by the P.N.C. hierarchy who were responsible for doing such things, I wonder how they are feeling now about it.

I wonder if they are still quite sure that they want the P.N.C. at any level to represent them. Not only are the members of the local authorities immature, irresponsible and lack of a sense of dedication but, as I said, so is the P.N.C. Government of Guyana. For by the rigging which went on at the local government level, and I am only dealing with that now. The rigging

that went on there, they were responsible for putting completely unsuitable people into power as leaders in such an important place as local authorities. To allow these people, not only have they done it but now to further allow them to continue in power shows again that the P.N.C Government is irresponsible and that it could not care less what type of person rules, what type of person it puts in. After all, local government is a serious matter. We do not want a child, a teenager, you want mature people to take the responsibility to guide the local authorities. These people are there now not doing their jobs properly and they should not be allowed to continue in office. *[Interruption]* I did not say that they were immature, the President of G.A.L.A. did, and immaturity is not measured and counted in age, you can be 80 and immature, and you can be 18 and have sense of responsibility. It has absolutely nothing to do with age. It depends on the person.

How long are the people of Guyana going to allow what is happening to continue? How much longer will they stand for it? There is only one way to put a stop to this kind of thing and that is to have local government elections now when they are due free and fair without any rigging. It must be held now and it must not be postponed. The Government does not seem to realize that you can push people so far but the time will come when they will stand it no longer. This Government also seems to forget that it rules by the will of the people and that it can be put out by the will of the people. The choice is the people's choice and if you continue in this way they will certainly put you right out where you belong.

People at all sides are crying for a change. The scales are dropping from their eyes. They are seeing the Government for what it really is. They are seeing and feeling the results of placing power in the hands of those who seek to deceive and to confuse them by pretending to be what they are not, by giving them false information and by giving them a series of half truths.

For example, to talk about a half truth, I should like to refer to Carifesta and I am sorry again it is my friend the hon. Member Miss Margaret Ackman who the Government has once again made use of as it did to put her out as a feeler for the one-party state. Miss Ackman gave a

release in the Chronicle of Monday, 27th November, 1972. Big headlines on the front page: “Carifesta, \$5 million boom.” Fair enough. When you read the article what Miss Ackman said was perfectly true; people and visitors came into Guyana, they spent money in our shops, in our restaurants, at GIMPEX and at Demico House as she said, at the snackettes and money was in circulation. This is perfectly true. But it is amazing how this Government can see the value of having people come into Guyana and to have money in circulation when it applies to one of its pet brainchildren, like Carifesta, but it cannot see it as an overall policy for the improvement of the economic position in Guyana to allow people to come into Guyana and spend money freely. But what Miss Ackman said here is only half truth. She has spoken about the benefit it has been to the business community, but she has not said how much it cost the nation. What the people want to know is how much did Carifesta cost the nation. The Government is only telling half truths.

But, sir, before you stop me and say I am being irrelevant – I am not because I was illustrating the half truths. As I said earlier, people want a change, the high rate of unemployment, the high cost of living, the poor medical facilities are all slowly but surely making the people realize the mistake they made by voting for the P.N.C. whether at central or local government level. The horrors that they endured in the past, of rape, by and large, are a peace loving people and would not want to return to this type of thing, what they want is the freedom of voting the way they want, freely and fairly, casting their vote one man, one vote in a ballot box. This is their democratic right and this should not be denied them by postponing the Local Government Elections.

The President of G.A.L.A. has said that he wants to give them a chance to become more matured, responsible and to have a sense of dedication. We turn to what the hon. Minister of Home Affairs said about them and I quote from the Bill:

“With the introduction of local government reform, the councillors who were first elected have not been in office for a full term and it is considered desirable that in

this initial period of the implementation of reforms in the system of local government those councillors of local authorities who were first elected under the new system of local government should be permitted to remain in office not later than the end of 1974 in the interests of the administration of the affairs of the respective local authorities.”

I wish to say that I think neither the reason given by the President of GALA nor the reason given by the hon. Minister of Home Affairs is a good enough reason. It is not necessary to use such drastic measures to satisfy themselves by keeping these people who are ill-equipped in office.

I should like to deal first with the remarks of the President of GALA.

“I am anxious that local government strive to maturity so as to prepare themselves for the day when the central government would devolve more powers and more responsibilities upon them thus bringing them more meaningfully in the development process.”

3.05 p.m.

This is perfectly correct and the P.N.C. knows that it is true. Why then fill the posts in local authorities with party hacks, and hangers-on, and persons who are not capable of holding office? The best way is to put them out by free and fair elections now.

I always thought that the days of godfatherism were over. I agree it was part of our colonial past and if one had a godfather in the right place, one could get what one wanted, and where one wanted it. We have exchanged one kind of godfatherism for another. We have *P.N.C.ism*. You have got to belong to the P.N.C., to know the right P.N.C. people, to get a job in the right place and have the best of everything. They always say: “Oh, we have to leave our colonial mentality and past behind”, but we have just exchange one type for another. I could tell of many other instances, but I do not think they are relevant here. This is the way it goes on.

Where are we going? So far as the hon. Minister of Home Affairs is concerned, to give these people more time, how long is long enough? If those who were elected to office had been doing their job as properly as in the way they should do it, time should make absolutely no difference. After all, it is two years, by now they should at least have had their plans ready and prepared, and as a matter of fact they should have made a start. These plans would be there laid out and they would be passed on, so if they did not get their seats back and some new person came in, the plans are there and they would be able to carry on, so the question of time is irrelevant and is a poor excuse for the postponement of the elections. I am wondering if these people are afraid of losing their seats, which is why they want to keep on for another two years.

My party cannot support this Bill for the postponement of the Local Authorities Elections. It is against the democratic rights of the people of Guyana. We of the United Force, because of the rigging of the General Elections represent just approximately 24,000 people. We owe them a duty, they put us here to see and look after their interest and the interests of the other citizens of Guyana, and if we voted for the postponement of the local authority elections, we would be betraying the trust they placed in us. We therefore cannot vote for the postponement of the Local Authorities Elections.

Mr. Hamid: The introduction of this Bill to Parliament, which seeks to have postponement of the local government elections, is obnoxious, deliberate, and wicked, and stems from the system of rigging to place people in high offices. The Bill when passed will become effective as from the 31st October 1972 to the end of October 1974 or at an earlier date as may be determined by the Minister. The postponement of local government elections is a clear indication of failure after failure and this is, of course, on the part of Government and councillors of local authorities. This occurred from the very first time in which reforms to local government were introduced by this Government.

G.A.L.A. is the mouthpiece of the P.N.C., and by statements issued by its President, Mr. McGowan, who found himself as President of G.A.L.A. by a system of rigged elections, it would

seem that Mr. McGowan is the most confused man in Guyana so far as local government elections are concerned. He seems not to be approaching the subject matter in the true sense of the word. At one stage, he seems either to be shifting blame to councillors or to officers, and at time he indicates by public statements that even his organization has failed immensely to produce what it was there to do. Let me give an indication as to what Mr. Hulbert McGowan said. This is a statement from the Guyana Graphic of 19th November, 1972 page 1.

“The President of the Guyana Association of Local Authorities (GALA) Mr. Hulbert McGowan, yesterday accused government agencies and officers of placing obstacles in the way of local authorities, of displaying a callous attitude towards farmers and of being very unco-operative.”

This is one shifting that he made. Here, Mr. McGowan, President of G.A.L.A. is making a bold statement that there are failures in local authorities because of the appointment of Government officers. We must look back at the entire process of the General Elections. Rigging was responsible for the appointment of officers in high places. Here is a rigger complaining about a grand system of rigging. Confusion is taking place because of a proxy government in office placing officers to administer local authorities and so the shifting of blame is moving from one end to another end. Mr. McGowan, who seems to be rather confused, went on to make another statement. This time Mr. McGowan is attacking councillors elected by a system of rigging again.

The Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Hamid, I hope you do not get confused by using all that rigging.

Mr. Hamid: No, sir. Those who rig will be confused. But we on this side will never be confused. This is what was said on the 29th November, 1972 by Mr. McGowan, Guyana Graphic, page 1:

“Commenting on the attitude of some councillors, Mr. McGowan said that those members of councils who were elected on the ticket of the People’s National Congress and do not want to abide by the principles of the Government should resign and give others a chance to serve.”

This statement may have several meaning because while the P.N.C. was looking around at election time to find the best-suited P.N.C. activist to be nominated and elected to office, it did not realize that many of its own supporters were in fact sympathetic to other residents of the area in which they live.

3.15 p.m.

As such, it could be seen at times that some of these councillors were willing to have motions passed and have the administration run in such a way that benefits will be given to all and sundry. But what happened? He went on to show that the P.N.C. Government which placed its hacks as councillors they must toe a Government line, a party-line, they must be directed to do what the P.N.C. Government may wish them to do, and not knowing what are the problems of local authorities these councillors found themselves in a dilemma. They could not administer, there were failures and as such this Bill is before this House. Mr. McGowan at another date, 23rd October, 1972 in the Graphic said this:

“Mr. Hulbert McGowan, President of the Guyana Association of Local Authorities said that it was a shame that they had to meet a handful of people at such an important meeting.

He warned: ‘If councillors cannot carry out their onerous duties and find time to serve, they should quit by tendering their resignations.

This is not the time to carry dead wood. These are not the days when a few chairmen and a few councillors used to run a local authority’.”

This is what he realized at a GALA meeting at which he and the Minister were invited. I will come back later to the Minister's statement. The only two persons in this hall were at one end the Minister and the other end Mr. McGowan. Even the GALA members did not find it possible to attend and ignored the P.N.C. and its Minister who represented the Government. This was a total disgrace. This was just to show that councillors although elected on a P.N.C. ticket were now becoming a bit frustrated and against even their P.N.C. bosses. This is what happened with the Minister of Local Government. They went on to bang at each end of the table, they were confused and as such the whole meeting was a farce and GALA was there as another mouthpiece of the Government.

When this Bill was first placed on the Order Paper of Parliament and introduced in this House this Bill here, these few pages were not available for members to read. This was also an indication to show that the Government was confused.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Hamid that is not a correct statement. When the Bill was introduced in this House it was already published in the Gazette.

Mr. Hamid: It was also published in the Gazette. What I am saying is that this bit of paper was still at the Printery.

Mr. Speaker: The rule is it must be published in the Gazette.

Mr. Hamid: Let us take it for granted. It is because it was published in the Gazette that I became aware of what the Government's intentions were. May I continue now, sir, to show that the Government used GALA because it knew fully well all along that it was going to have this Bill in Parliament. But the Government looked for a scape goat by the name of the Guyana Association of Local Authorities and primed them to come out with a statement that local government elections should be cancelled. In other words, have the elections postponed. GALA was used by this Government. When they spoke of it they said that the reason for this

postponement is the time factor, it was most important that for reform for local government to be practiced *in toto* it would take time.

It clearly indicates that if local government will be introduced in Guyana projects must be implemented to train officers and councillors to know what their functions would be. This is one of the main topics of discussions in the Marshall Report. Local authorities that now employ overseers and officers to run their affairs are confused also because they are not trained, they do not know a thing about administration, they employ people who are party hacks and pay them handsomely and we must learn of all these things. The Minister must not come here and say the reason for postponing Local Government Elections is because local authorities themselves ask for a postponement. This is not good enough.

The Minister of Home Affairs in his introduction made a very empty speech, it had nothing in which one would be able to grasp to see what was really responsible for having this wicked Bill before the Parliament. This is denying representations of people throughout the length and breadth of this country. That is why I said the Bill was wicked.

Then we come to estimates. Local authorities by statutory declaration will have to produce an estimate at least by 15th November in every year which must be passed by the statutory authority and must be forwarded to the Minister concerned. This is clearly indicated in the Municipal and Districts Council Act, 1969 No. 24. We know what has happened since those councillors were elected by rigged elections. Many of them did not submit their estimates for the other year and this also is a clear indication of what we call locally “*dunda heads*” which they put into local administration. The present Minister, the former Minister of Local Government and the Minister of Home Affairs introducing this Bill must bear full responsibility for the failures.

Even now, I think there are not more than two local authorities which have already submitted their estimate as required by law.

The 15th November has already passed. If they were preparing for elections from the 1st to 7th December, surely, no council would have been able to do the necessities.

The Government did not frame its laws properly to be followed by councillors. They cannot have estimates by a local authority and then elections to follow immediately after estimates are submitted. It does not sound proper and that is why they came here and tried to seek a postponement of local government elections so that they can remedy their ills. Let the Minister tell us the truth and the facts relating to the postponement. Do not use the local authorities to say they asked for it. The local authorities are guided by the P.N.C. they are thugs and scapegoats of the P.N.C. The system of rigging is from top to bottom and this is responsible for maladministration in local authorities.

Drainage and irrigation: What has been done to drainage and irrigation in this country? Very limited! I have travelled extensively; one can see several drains with grass growing all over. Main drainage trenches and canals are all silted up. Why? Incompetence! They put their thugs who do not know anything about administration. All their interest is taxing people without a proper system of taxation. This is all written in the Report of Dr. Marshall, and all that is to be done is to have it implemented. Very little was done.

Flooding! One council, a country district, this is the Cane Grove area of which I myself am a political representative, had a problem where there were a series of breaches, and ratepayers and taxpayers time and again approached the Ministry. I myself made representation and nothing practical was done. Because of this, flooding took place all over the place in many villages and district councils. To name a few, Canal Polder, Essequibo Coast, between Adventure and Queenstown, Pomeroon, Cane Grove, Mahaica, Mahaicony, Abary where thousands of families suffered and millions of dollars were lost because of corrupt practices, because of not giving the people what they are paying for, because of not giving the people what they are entitled to. They are there and they do not know what to do. The drainage and

irrigation sluices and kokers, despite the appeals, nothing practical was done, and this was responsible for the flooding of the country. All these things are things to be considered.

Then we come to other important matters such as valuation. Valuation is a very important matter to be discussed. Here again is where we see discrimination at its highest. The Marshall Report. This is a very small part of what Marshall said. Page 5 item 6 reads:

“Rates are levied, not on the owner or occupier, but on the land itself, and on the buildings where they are rated. The basis is the capital value. Values are fixed by persons, usually carpenters, builders or farmers, appointed and paid by the village.”

We do not have any objection even if it is a P.N.C. carpenter, or whoever he may be, but the person appointed in the name of the council to do valuation for the council must be able to know the experience of the individual, and his character, and he must not discriminate in valuation. There must be a principle about valuation so that when these assessors assess the property of the residents, they will be able to give a fair reflection of what should really be the position, but instead of that, they use party hacks and they discriminate. Because of their opinion, you cannot read a man’s mind, and because he may look like a P.P.P. supporter, he is a rich man, tax him heavily, and because the fellow has big land and a little house and because he cannot balance his budget, nothing you could say that he is not responsible for the way he is living, but because of his way of living he has a two by three room, nothing impresses the assessor and we find he do not want to assess him with the same man on the other side.

Section 200 of Act No. 24 of 1969, Municipal and District Councils Act,

“Where a part of a Council area will in any financial year either derive no benefit or only partial benefit from expenditure to be incurred by the council thereof in respect of one or more services provided by the council, or will not enjoy as high standards in such services as the remainder of the council area, the council shall be resolution declare such part of the council area to be a separate rating area from the remainder of the council area and shall fix the rate percentage thereof by making an appropriate reduction from the percentage fixed for the remainder of the council area.”

Here it is clearly stated that the fixing of a percentage on the assessment of any property must be a uniform type except in places where development may occur, and if this is so, you charge the appropriate rate. But this Government is discriminating. Let me give an example of what is happening, sir.

Zeelust to Cotton Tree area. Rates and taxes of this local authority, at first, it was 6 per cent general, fixed rate of 6 per cent on valuation. In the year 1971 it was increased to 9 per cent. In the country area, the rates and taxes increased to 27 per cent by 1972. That was for the first depth. Cotton Tree second depth, where it was 6 per cent, it increased to 10 per cent in 1972. In the D'Edward area, the second depth which is just a narrow line that divides Cotton Tree from D'Edward, it was reduced to 5 per cent in 1972. When the question was raised as to what is responsible, they could not give the reason why D'Edward, it was 5 per cent whereas, in Cotton Tree it was 27 per cent, but after careful examination and study and question the members of the local authority, it was clearly stated that the reason why the price had dropped to 5 per cent in D'Edward was because the Vice-Chairman was living in D'Edward.

3.35 p.m.

But it goes further than that. Rosignol is paying 3 per cent for residential area, and it is paying 8 per cent for cultivated area. The reason for this drop is that the Chairman is now living in Rosignol. This is the sort of discrimination that is going on. Let the Minister say what is responsible for this wicked Bill before the House. Let him say that it is not because of the discrimination and the rigging.

Let us go a little further and see another form of discrimination in this area. A lot of land occupied by the Atma cinema is paying 3 per cent. Then a plot of land immediately west of the cinema is paying 6 per cent, in one area there is no development, and those that are east of the cinema are paying 20 per cent. The point is the man who owns the Atma cinema is a P.N.C. thug. They are using all the religious organisations, they are using their thugs and this is the kind

of discrimination that is going on. The Vice President of the Maha Sabha was appointed a member of the Public Service Commission by this proxy Government. I guess you know him, Mr. Speaker, he is a close associate of yours.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Hamid your leader is misinforming you.

Mr. Hamid: No, sir. I am aware of all of this.

Mr. Speaker: You must get your facts correctly.

Mr. Hamid: In the Patentia area there is a nuclear Housing scheme. The rates and taxes were the highest in the district council area, it was rated at 6 per cent because it was said that in this area there are predominantly P.P.P. supporters. At Good Intent, within the same area, those people are paying 2 per cent taking into account they were the existing local authority for many years. Because Mr. Parks who is the Chairman of the Local Authority is living in Good Intent the rates are 2 per cent.

We go now to the Toevlugt area where in the past all the agricultural land was developed since the Boerasiri project started. The property was paying rates to cover maintenance and administrative charges which varied from \$2.51 in 1962 to \$4.86 in 1970. Now that this area has been brought under local government the land was assessed at \$3.00 per acre and the rate was 8 per cent accruing at \$24 per acre. The proprietors seeing this as an unreasonable thing and seeing that there was no development going on or planned to be carried out they decided that they should take the necessary steps to petition the District Council, the District Commissioner's Officer and the Minister of Local Government. These are unreasonable charges that have been put on these poor people. Here a Government is calling on people to produce food and it is penalizing them on the other side. After representation was made by those authorities the rates were reduced to just 2 per cent making it \$6 per acre instead, a difference of \$18. Could you image that, sir?

These are some of the things that must occupy the minds of the people in this country, discrimination generally. Now let us see what Government Ministers are doing. In the Vigilance squatting area, south of the public road, north of the railway embarkment, on the eastern side of Friendship sideline dam – I want to give the precise location so that hon. Members of the Government would know. Apparently the Minister responsible for this seems not be here in the House today.

3.45 p.m.

While other areas have a supply of electricity, water, and all the essential things, this area hardly had anything done. They realized that these people were squatting there and while in other areas they were offering the people land reasonably and they put electricity and water and roads and interlot drains and central drains, in this particular area they had a pressure group. They brought the Minister in and they had a pressure group. They brought the Minister in and they had their meetings, and then they went from house to house fooling the people, telling them: “Sign this paper, sign this proxy, if you put your name here, we will give you water, we will see you get electricity, we will see you get to purchase the land, we will see you have better roads, and all the like. This is a disgraceful act, Mr. Speaker. Let the Minister study all these little points that I am making --

Mr. Speaker: They are not little points, they are big points.

Mr. Hamid: Sir, I am glad you realize the importance of it. Things went far at the last local government elections, with many promises, “get into the council, we will back you, and we will offer you \$100 a month.” “Bribing them to be in office, but the \$100 could not be found. They are taking them to the rum shop. The Minister said it. Chicken in the rough and drinking rum, and he must know because if he knows that officers are drinking rum and eating chicken in the rough, he too will have to be there to be sure of what he is saying. Surely it is a disgrace.

Very few meetings were held and because of a lack of a quorum, when members went to meetings, they could not hold meetings. They did not get the bribe and so they decided to retract. Even in some local authorities where councillors were attending meetings at times. There was corruption. There were people on the Council and they wanted land to build a house. There were some of them who were fighting to get jobs for their sons and daughters. There were some of them who were seeking to get contracts from the local authority and still remain councillors. All these are illegal practices, like Greenland Co-operative, typical example, this is responsible for maladministration.

Councillors are resigning. Why? A member of the P.N.C. controlled district council of Crabwood Creek on the Upper Corentyne has resigned from the Council. What was responsible for this? These chaps are resigning because they are fed up. Like the one we have here at Johns-Port Mourant District Council. One of the councillors is in love with a young lady, he has a wife and “friends” with another girl. There he wants this girl to be appointed as a typist. She does not know how to type. When they put the typewriter in front of her, she asked them what to do with it. *[Interruption]*

Let Mr. Budhoo say; he was a party to it. Let him say why this Bill is before the House. Do not shift blame. They want favours. Some of them who are lawyers, they want contracts from Government so they can stand up and get the perks. That is why they have this maladministration. We come back to consider what is responsible for all of this. The answer is quite simple. Rigging and other “ings” and as long as they continue to rig they will continue to have the other “ings” behind them. The same system they are using to put their backs in office, the same rigging they will use to put them out of office.

The time is coming, the handwriting is on the wall, and that is why we say; whither are we going? Let them tell us what is responsible for the failures of Government from top to bottom. Shifting Ministers and reshuffling will not solve our problem. We hear of the other two Ministers holding one portfolio; three of them holding one portfolio now. Father, Son, and Holy

Ghost. Report of the Commissioner of Local Government for 1965 printed in 1968. That was the last Report. Let them publish their Report regularly so that we will be able to get the information. So not let us have hidden subsidies, and as soon as they change their minds, let us have free and fair elections. Only then will local government be able to function in the true sense of the word.

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr. Speaker, postponement of local government elections is a political decision. In fact, those of us on this side of the House see the postponement as a major decision. What we have to bear in mind in debating this Bill is the fact that only the P.N.C. contested both phases of the elections but other parties were involved in the first phase, and I make the point at the very outset, that G.A.L.A., not any officer in G.A.L.A., does not have the mandate to speak on behalf of all the councils of this country or indeed the people who are involved in the payment of rates and taxes and local government generally.

One significant fact that must be borne in mind in debating this Bill is that when this whole Ordinance was conceived and drafted for the implementation of Marshall Plan, it was envisaged since then that this first period of local government would have been a short period and I refer immediately to section 207 of the Local Authorities Elections Act of 1969 where it is clearly stated that in the first instance the Minister will issue an order for the first election and the Minister will decide on the duration of the term of office of councillors of all the local authorities in this country.

3.55 p.m.

Now sir, the hon. Minister of Home Affairs said that the Minister decides this, and the Minister can change it. What the hon. Minister does not understand is that he is not changing certain things that are hindering the administration of the local authorities or doing any act for the regularization of the functioning of these local authorities but the Minister has come to this House with a Bill. Because under this section if the Minister does not understand let me allude

him to the fact that regularization of the administration of local authorities can be done by Order and there was no need for a Bill in those areas. But talking about postponement is moving beyond what was expected when this law was promulgated.

Let me also make the point that G.A.L.A. is being used. It is unfortunate that those gentlemen are allowing themselves to be a party to this Bill. I make these points because the postponement of Local Government Elections is influenced by the fact that Government has in mind to hold General Elections first. Obviously and logically, the Government does not want to use its energies in the lesser elections and so Government is preserving all its energies, all its men, all its apparatus and everything for the General Elections which is the bigger thing.

Which officer of G.A.L.A. can tell us in this House that he is a party to such a major, tactical move and indeed decision by the P.N.C. Government? It is clear for anybody to see that this decision came from above and G.A.L.A. had absolutely nothing to do with it. [Interruption] The hon. Minister of Labour said what comes from above is blessings. I will hope that those gentlemen would not want to be blessed the way this Government is seeking to bless them.

I was expecting that when this Bill was presented the hon. Minister of Home Affairs would have come to us and told us all the reasons for the postponement of the elections. Because all he has said in his contribution to this House is that this postponement is not a decision of this Government, if I interpreted him correctly, indeed he said that the people who are concerned themselves have asked for this postponement. In fact, the hon. Minister is saying that G.A.L.A. has requested this and the Government is satisfied with what G.A.L.A. said and has therefore brought this Bill. As I said the Government has in fact postponed elections because it wants to concentrate on the general elections. Let us examine the logic of the arguments the Government purported to adduce in presenting this Bill to Parliament. If the Government was honest when it said that the decision to postpone Local Government Elections was influenced by the request or it is as a result of direct representation by G.A.L.A., then one would have expected

that the Government would have already set in motion the machinery for the Local Government Elections. Let us look at section --

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, before you go on to that perhaps this is a convenient time to take the suspension. This sitting is suspended for thirty minutes.

Sitting suspended at 4 p.m.

4.30 p.m.

On resumption --

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Persaud

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: Sir, I was making the point that under the Act there was provision giving the Minister powers to regularize the functioning of the Authorities. Of course, that Act did not make provision for the postponement of elections. Therefore this Bill had to come for postponement. The point I was making is that the whole arrangement for Local Government Elections was made on the basis that the first period would have been shorter than the other periods when the whole thing is regularized and put into operation. I am not saying that the Act gives the Minister power to postpone elections.

Now, sir, under the Local Government Elections Act, 1969, elections for Local Government had to be held between 1st November and 7th December. When one looks at section 8 of this Act one sees that an Order had to be made first before we reach this stage of elections, an Order had to be made for registration. In that Order the qualifying date had to be stated, the date when the electoral register shall be published as required by section 12, date when objections may be lodged, publicizing of the final list as required by section 22 of the Act and these should have been published in the Gazette. The point I pause to make is this: if the

Government has no intention of postponing the elections and the Government first came up with this idea when G.A.L.A. intervened, then one would have expected that the Motion for elections would have started well in advance to comply with the requirements of the Local Authorities Elections Act. But there was no evidence anywhere, there was no indication anywhere that the Government was moving to hold these elections.

Section 41, requires the chief elections officer to appoint the date when the list of candidates must be submitted, and this list had to be submitted twenty-one days before the elections. I refer to these sections merely to support my argument, because my point is the idea for the postponement of Local Government Elections was conceived well over three months ago, or there about and not recently.

4.35 p.m.

And so the dramatic move by the Government, G.A.L.A. issuing a release, the Government talking about local government elections, this was planned, and G.A.L.A. was called in and told to make the request.

Who are the people that constitute G.A.L.A. or who are the people who constitute the various councils throughout the country? All the councils, with the exception of a few where opponents of the Government went in, are controlled by the Government and not by anybody else, and so, what in fact this postponing is doing, is imposing P.N.C. councils on the people throughout the country. It is an imposition on the people. The Government has not so far adduced any argument to influence anybody to support this Bill before the House, and so I make the point that the Government is fooling none save and except itself, so far as postponement of the local government elections is concerned.

You see, sir, the Chairman of G.A.L.A. is reported in the press as saying that he had to convince the Minister about the postponement. This again is ridiculous. He had to convince the

Minister about the postponement and why the postponement? So that the councils or those who constitute the councils at the moment can proceed with the developmental work. It is accepted practice, whether in local government or central government, that where those people stop, the newly-elected members will take over and carry on. Is the Government suggesting to this House and to intelligent people that if these people were removed from office new members elected to the various municipalities and councils could not have carried on the development work?

If my information is correct, I understand that not more than two or three councils have submitted their estimates for approval as required by the Act. This is further evidence to support my argument that this whole idea of postponement was before, and so the postponement is based on the fact that the Government wants, as I said earlier, to prepare for General Elections. Not very long ago in this very honourable House I referred to the fact that the hon. Minister of Agriculture and National Development was overseas and I said then that his mission overseas was to help the Government to organize overseas votes for the General Elections. What is very significant is that today we see the hon. Leader of the House Mr. Ramsaroop is absent. I understand he has gone overseas now to strengthen the team that is already there to rig the forthcoming General Elections. I was hoping that an announcement would have been made stating exactly where the hon. Member is, but silently, he has gone overseas.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Persaud, did you not listen to the announcement that he was on leave?

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: Yes. Leave. Sir. I remember very clearly in 1968, the hon. Member Mr. Bissember went just about a few months before the General Elections on a similar mission like Mr. Ramsaroop and as soon as he returned, he was kicked out of the Cabinet. I wonder whether the P.N.C. has the same in store for Mr. Ramsaroop when he returns, if he fails in his mission. Members have been saying in this House that whenever we speak, we refer to elections and the rigging of elections, but this whole country, the life of this country, the unity of the people of this country, the desire for people to live in this country, all these things

are dependent on elections, and if people are led to believe that they will have no say as to who governs this country, then that is enough evidence for them to withdraw their active economic contribution to this country. That type of evidence is forcing people to leave this country every day.

This is a basic question and the question of local government elections is not in any different position, because the administration of local authorities has to do with people paying rates and taxes and the development of their areas. My colleague who spoke before me referred to discrimination in valuation and other matters that are affecting people throughout the country. Let me refer to some of the evidence to show how the present local authorities came into office and we will see that proxies played a significant part in the local government elections. I refer first to the 1964 elections. In the 1964 General Elections, 6,635 proxies were cast in this country and what is significant about the Report of the 1964 election is the restriction on the type of persons who were entitled to apply for proxies, in that the Report goes to the extent of clarifying who were the people who could have applied for proxies. I refer to one of these, paragraph 39 of this Report:

“For purposes of clarification the Elections Commission informed Returning Officers and Political Parties that an elector was not entitled to vote by proxy under regulation 31 (1) (g) merely because his place of work was some distance from his polling place or because he had moved his residence since he was registered.”

And similar clarifications.

In fact, the regulations of 1964 were different from the regulations of 1968, and indeed, different from the local government elections Act. You see, sir, in 1964, two proxies were allowed. In 1968, four proxies were allowed. What is very significant, apart from the restriction, is that in section 33 (3) of the 1964 elections regulations there was a provision compelling the Returning Officer in all the electoral districts to make available the list of proxies four days before the General Elections. In 1968, the government first by Act 16 of 1968 made

provision for that number of proxies to be increased from two to five, meaning that a voter would have had six votes, one his own and five proxies.

Because of our strong protest in this House and because of the fact that the whole nation felt that this thing had gone so bad, by regulation 21 of 1968, that was amended and it was reduced to three proxies.

4.45 p.m.

It shows the rascality of the Government. It shows the intention of the Government to rig elections and to deprive the people of their rights to decide who should run this country or who should run the local administration throughout Guyana.

Then again, in 1969, the Local Authorities Elections Act, the Government retained part of the provision I referred to in the 1964 Elections Act, and the provision where the returning officer was compelled to show the List of proxies to the candidates four days before the elections was removed. I make these points because they are relevant to the debate, in that in the last Local Government elections a large number of proxies were used and many of the councillors who are today saying that they are demanding postponement of the elections they got their positions by rigging and by proxies this is why I so strongly condemn those who constitute G.A.L.A. today and the various local authorities. They do not have the mandate of the people; they do not have the authority to speak, the people did not vote for them, they got in by rigging or else many of them would not have been councillors throughout the country.

Therefore, you have this rigging position and this high use of proxies. In fact, in Leguan slone, of the total number of votes cast, 25 per cent were proxies. In New Amsterdam 24 per cent were proxies. We had a polling agent at Leguan and one at New Amsterdam. We do not care what figures the Government gives; we were able to record every proxy vote and we have the figures. I give those figures based on our actual participation in the polling and being present

in the various polling station throughout the country. The Government has used the system of proxy to such an extent that one of our candidates, Christian, who was in the elections in Georgetown – I was there in Alexander Village – when he went to cast his vote he was told that somebody voted for him already by proxy. That proxy was a forgery. Why is it the Police did not prosecute the man by forged Christian's signature?

There was forgery throughout this country so far as proxies were concerned. The hon. Member Dr. Ramsahoye faced the judge and his position was decided by the judge. In the case I refer to the man has not been prosecuted, he has not even been spoken to because the P.N.C. are the ones who encourage people to forge persons' signatures and to be part of the proxies. You see, sir, what obtained with regard to councillors when the P.P.P. was in office is this: all the village councillors were the people's representative themselves, political parties were not involved then, in that there were people who grew up in village administration. The present councillors are people appointed by the P.N.C.

Let me say what is happening and let me say why elections should not be postponed. I merely refer to the headlines without going into the details. It is attributed to the Minister of Public Service, the hon. Mr. Mingo on 15th February, 1971 where he is reported to have said that Government proposes to introduce legislation for holding recalcitrant councillors in check. I do not know what yardstick is used to decide when a councillor is recalcitrant or not? In some of these councils there were people who were in the old administration and they were not prepared to take party directions, they have spoken out, and the Government speaks now of passing legislation to hold these councillors in check; in that they baby party was breaking up in so far as the report is concerned.

Let me refer to a more telling story in the *Graphic*, 28th February, 1972. This statement was made by Mr. Ramsingh Rai, District Commissioner. This is what is reported to have been said by Mr. Rai:

“Mr. Rai charged that some councillors of local authorities spend a lot time generating heat in explosive arguments and council meetings over petty matters. It was found impossible, he said, for one to have meetings owing to the absence of a quorum over a period of several months.”

I do not want to bore the Parliament with all that he has said. In fact, the District Commissioner is saying that one of the councils was without quorum, therefore meetings could not have been held for several months. These are the councils the Government wants to continue by this Bill to postpone the Elections so that councils will not function. They are not having quorum.

Sir, I refer to another report. This time in the **Daily Chronicle**, Tuesday 20th June, 1972:

“Mr. McGowan severely criticized some councillors for causing clashes between councillors and chief executive officers because of their behavior.”

He is now referring to these people –

“They seem to believe that because they have been put on these councils by the People’s National Congress, they are the be all and end all.”

And he goes on to castigate councillors. This is what Mr. McGowan said and his report cannot be inaccurate so far as the Government is concerned, it came from the Government’s mouthpiece, the *Daily Chronicle*. The point I make then is that the Government’s spokesmen are condemning the councils, lack of quorum, bad behavior, they feel because the P.N.C. put them there they can do what they like and as a result of this type of behavior the people in the various areas are suffering. There is no development and there is chaos throughout the country.

In another report of the *Guyana Graphic* of 14th August, 1972 here again Mr. McGowan. He said and I quote:

“But he declared that some councillors and their councils” *[Interruption]*
This is a very serious charge against councillors, and I advance these points to

show why they should not postpone these elections, and the Government's mouthpiece is supporting our arguments that these councils are not functioning well. Hear what he is reported to have said:

“Councillors use their councils for self aggrandizement, helping friends, and using subterfuge to get money from the councils to be spent in areas where it should not be properly spent.”

Look at this indictment! This is an indictment where Mr. McGowan is saying that people are using subterfuge, personal aggrandizement – whatever that means. They divert development into areas that should not be developed. In places like La Grange and other areas one can see clear discrimination in so far as development is concerned. The Leguan Village Council, the estimates had to be declared null and void because of incompetence. I can go on and on to quote all these areas where the councils are not functioning properly. As a matter of fact, the Amendment earlier this year or last year which sought to give the Government the right to fill vacancies when they occur puts local government in the same position it was so many years ago where you will have nominated people constituting the councils throughout the country. Why I say this is because in many councils already there are persons who did not face the electorate. If you examine the *Gazette* and look at the names you will see that those persons were never part of the Local Government Elections.

4.55 p.m.

Today, in some areas there are councillors, and probably in other areas, village chairmen. The Government had in mind to change the chairmen of many village councils. I will not make any suggestion in so far as the municipalities are concerned. I was making a point about proxies.

A headmaster of Tain Government School collected proxies from people. They had to picket him. I understand he was in tears and the people demanded the return of the proxies. He got the forms and cut the people's signatures out and gave the people the forms. These which I have here were the signatures collected from the Tain area.

There is a man named Boor Persaud. When the government by Act declared who should be the first mayor of Corriverton Council, he was made chairman. He started collecting proxies and in fact people saw him with proxy forms. The result was that the cinema of which he was manager was closed down. That cinema is the Maya Cinema at Corriverton and it is owned by the wife of Mr. Vernon Bhairam. In fact, sir, we see a report that they will no longer be involved in the collection of proxies because the box office was affected --

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, if I remember correctly, I saw it in the *Mirror*, one Sugrim Persaud said he was the owner of that cinema.

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: I see the report says, not the owner, the management of the Maya Cinema. But in fact, I can positively say that Mr. Bhairam's wife is the owner so far as the licence is concerned. So far as the financial arrangement is concerned, Mr. Sugrim Persaud is Bhairam's father-in-law and the owner's father. Whatever it is, the popular term is "massa cow massa bull."

Mr. Speaker: I think you should be fair to the House. When the hon. Member Mr. Derek Jagan was referred to as the brother of the Leader of the P.P.P., I upheld the objection. Similarly, when the hon. Leader of the Opposition referred to an hon. Member of the House as Vice-Chairman of the Maha Sabha, I also upheld an objection.

Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud: What the hon. Leader of the Opposition should have said is, Mr. Bhairam is Chairman of the Berbice Regional Committee of the Maha Sabha and an executive member of the Maha Sabha, and one of those who participated in the rigging at Essequibo. I am not bothering with Mr. Bhairam. I want to confine myself to this question local government and those who are involved in the collection of proxies. Here you have Mr. Boor Persaud. I understand he has now burnt up some of the proxies he collected because he felt that local government elections would have been held first. Whether that is true or not I do not know.

The P.N.C. and the Government are involved in the collection of proxies in the country and outside of the country. There is a headmaster at the Bush Lot Government Secondary School, Mr. Arnold Persaud. A man's child failed the Common entrance Examination and he went to this headmaster and this headmaster said: "Sign a proxy and I will let your child get into one of the secondary schools." That man is prepared to give an affidavit to that effect. I can go on and on naming people who are involved in the collection of proxies but what is significant in this rise from 6,000 in 1964, to, in 1968 according to the final figure, 19,287 proxies, and this is the Government's official report.

In fact we are convinced that more proxies were used in the General Elections than the figure given in the Report. Item 40 of that Report states that no person could be appointed to vote as a proxy for more than three electors. This was used to its fullest advantage that the Returning Officers experienced much difficulty in fulfilling the requirement of the legislation with respect to large numbers of applications for appointment of proxies from political parties. He was saying that the rigging was so massive that they could not prepare the record fast enough. The thing was done so clumsily, one was able to see clearly all the weaknesses of the last General Elections and the collection of proxies.

In fact, we feel that the postponement of these local government elections is based on the one fact which I mentioned earlier, that is, the Government wants to hold General Election first, and when one examines the duration of the postponement, two years, giving the Government up to 1974, one sees clearly that General Elections will be held before the end of that period. General Elections have to be held before March or by the ending of March, 1974. What the Government is doing is clearing the way for General Elections.

In some of the councils, councillors are tendering their resignations and they are not being accepted. In fact, influential members of the Government are asking those councillors to stay on. I am informed and reliably too, sir, that at Canals Polder several councillors tendered their resignations and have not been attending meetings.

Mr. Speaker: You have been speaking for 40 minutes and the hon. Minister of Local Government had 44 minutes. As you know, the time is 30 minutes.

Mr. Reepu Deman Persaud: I will finish in two or three minutes, sir, Clarke, Alphonso Agedy, Yusuff Ally, these are people who have resigned from the Canals Polder Local Authority. Mr. Maitland John has applied for three months' leave, which was granted, and then he applied subsequently for further leave, beyond December this year, and he was told: "Look you cannot get more after December." From this one council, three persons have resigned, and one person has been on leave for nearly six months and probably will be on leave for seven, eight months. He has been granted leave that is provided under this Ordinance, I may be wrong, but he is taking full advantage of the provision for the grant of leave in the local government Act. How are these councils to function?

5.05 p.m.

Sir, we now that at places like Rosignol, Buxton and other local authority areas people have actually taken court action opposing strongly the system of valuation. According to reports, in many of the local authority areas rates and taxes are not being collected. The councillors are threatening court action. The fact that the people are not paying is evidence that the people have no confidence in the administration. *[Interruption]*

Sir, they do not understand. The Council is P.N.C., but the people who have to pay are not P.N.C., they involve all the people, the electorate. Therefore, I make the point that the government should have come to this House and be honest. The Government should not embarrass its own comrades in G.A.L.A. to ask them to call for this postponement because there is no evidence to show that this postponement was conceived by them. May I say the fact that there is this illegal collection of proxies in the country; let me use this forum to call upon the Police Department to take action against those persons who are collecting proxies.

The is one last point to which I wish to refer. On the Corentyne, a man by the name of Mohamed Salim of No. 78 Village was caught collecting proxies from people. We have seen the signatures of people who have signed the proxies. In fact, it is not allowed by law for you to collect proxies before the date of elections is declared. [Interruption by Miss Field-Ridley] The acting hon. Leader of the House is a lawyer and she should know that. This incident was drawn to the attention of the Police and nothing has been done against Mr. Mohamed Salim. It means that Mr. Mohamed Salim is a P.N.C. In fact, when the proxies were taken away from him, they arrested the man who took away the proxies from him instead of the vagabond who was illegally collecting proxies. [Mr. Aaron: “Who was found with it?”]

I wish to say in conclusion, sir, that the P.P.P. is opposed to the postponement of Local Government elections and the P.P.P. feels that in view of all the problems in all the local authorities, in view of the Minister’s condemnation of councillors and so on, that election is the correct answer to change the situation, and to let people have councillors of their choice. The Government members are talking about rigging, it knows that it cannot on a fair basis win the Local Government Elections and it does not want to commit rigging twice in one year. It means rigging at Local Government Elections and rigging at General Elections. This is a Government of riggers and nothing else, and we are opposed to this measure and we will vote against it.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Local Government

The Minister of Local Government (Mr. Salim): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I had expected to hear some constructive criticisms which would have helped to improve the local authorities. But instead, what did we hear? We have heard a repetition of what has been going on in this House from the time I was elected to this Parliament, the same story all the time, the same song, the same dance.

There are no questions to answer. I should like to tell the House that the very hon. Member, Mr. Maccie Hamid, when he was a councillor at Kitty wanted one of the streets to be

named after him and the people pulled down the names from the streets. Let him deny that. Also he wants to attribute that type of malpractice to the present councillors.

Mr. Speaker, we had envisaged under the reformed system many new areas to be incorporated. The amount of work to be done to put the councils on their proper footing to start to collect rates and taxes was probably under-estimated. But we had to take the chance some time or the other. The P.P.P., on the pretext of introducing a reformed system of local government has postponed elections in 1958 and 1961. But they have never introduced any reformed system neither have they held any election as far as local government is concerned. It was this Government that introduced the reform, and it is this Government which realized that the problems are so many and serious and a chance must be given to the local authorities to go ahead to see that their plans become a reality or, at least, to a certain extent. They are on the go. They have heard criticisms by the Guyana Association of Local Authorities and by hon. Ministers against councillors. I think it is a good thing. We are people who have the courage to tell people regardless of who they are when they are wrong, when they are put to carry out a certain function and they act irresponsibly. If the P.P.P. had intended as the Opposition to assist in the development of rural areas they would have endeavoured to call the attention of councillors in the areas – because all of them live in some local authority area and one way or the other and they could have called the councillors and advised them or question them, “Well, what is going on?” But they have not done this.

The people are not yet paying rates and taxes generally because many of the old local authorities have been expanded to incorporate new areas. Many of the unorganized areas were created local authorities and the first thing to be done was to carry out an appraisalment of the properties and until the appraisalments are completed no rates or taxes can be levied. Now they spoke about high rates and taxes in some areas, and low rates and taxes in other areas because certain councillors live there. They understand their story.

The areas where the properties are valued high, they pay a lower rate, and where the properties were valued along time ago and the valuation is low, those are the areas where the rates have been carried up a little. All in all, development has to take place throughout the local authorities. They did not tell us why they had postponed the elections in 1958 and 1961 but what they told us then, the then Minister of Local Government told us that the B.G. Union of Local Authorities agreed after consultation for a postponement of the elections, and so I do not see why they have to criticize G.A.L.A. for recommending to Government a postponement.

G.A.L.A. is a more responsible organization than the British Guiana Union of Local Authorities. The British Guiana Union of Local Authorities spoke about five or six villages and two towns. G.A.L.A. speaks for sixty local authorities and G.A.L.A. has passed this as a resolution in its Annual Delegates Conference on August 28 and 29 this year. It was one of the resolutions of G.A.L.A. to request the Government to postpone the local government elections. The Opposition comes here to tell us that we asked G.A.L.A. to say that it wants a postponement of the elections.

People must learn to respect responsible organizations. G.A.L.A. is a more responsible organization than the whole Opposition put together because they hardly represent anybody. G.A.L.A. represents sixty local authorities and among the sixty local authorities there are five towns. G.A.L.A. represents more people than the whole Opposition put together, and so the Government after careful consideration of this important resolution of G.A.L.A. has decided to postpone the local government elections it is a political decision. We are politicians and we are here to make political decisions. We have made a decision to postpone the local government elections.

The hon. Member Mr. R.D. Persaud in his prelude said that the valuation of agricultural lands is too high. They are supporting the resistance of the sugar estates and the big landlords in the payment of rates and taxes, because they come here to tell us that the valuation is very high. Three hundred dollars. It is intended to take from those people, who can afford to pay, to

develop the areas of those people, who can hardly afford to pay for their development, and this is socialism. They tell us they are socialist and they come here to defend the capitalists like the sugar estates and all those rich people, by telling us that the valuation is very high.

In the whole history of the Opposition, the P.P.P., nothing has been done to improve the streets of Port Mourant where the hon. Leader of the Opposition was born. It was this government under the reform system which has started to metal the streets of Port Mourant to provide even better streets for the mother of the hon. Leader of the Opposition to walk on. This is the type of work we are doing. *[Interruption]* We are improving the drainage all over, in the residential areas and in the agricultural areas, but development has to start somewhere and it ends somewhere, and somebody is lucky to get first and somebody is unfortunate to get last. We can only carry out development to the amount of revenue we can collect from these areas locally and what Government can give centrally.

The hon. Member Mr. Hamid has referred to La Grange. La Grange has developed streets and roads now. The local authority of Crabwood Creek-Moleson Creek has been carrying out drainage work to bring into cultivation 4,000 odd acres of additional land in that local authority. It is an endeavour to employ more people within the area. The central government has given assistance and with what has been levied by rates and taxes, development is being carried out. In the No. 51 Good Hope area, the village district is putting up culverts for villages like 44, 45 and 46. These districts used to be strongholds of the P.P.P. but they cannot go there to collect a vote. They are really scared to go into these areas.

The people at No 51- Good Hope put up one sluice with Government assistance and by self help and they are now embarking on the second one. This will provide drainage for a large amount of agricultural land at Nos. 44, 45 and 46. In the Bush Lot-Adventure local authority, development is carried out by way of providing better drainage and irrigation facilities. In the Hogatype-Lancaster area, three new irrigation trenches were dug. Many streets were improved. In the Bloomfield area, the local authority is putting up a market.

In the Port Mourant area, streets are now being metalled, drains are being dug. At the rear of Port Mourant, the rice farmers have put up new sluices and they have been in a position to harvest a good crop. In the Triumph-Beterverwagting district, where the P.P.P. had its stronghold, the local authority is constructing first-class streets, providing better drainage facilities. *[Interruption]*

I am leaving the coastal area, I am going to Leguan, there were no drainage facilities there. Nothing was done there for the people during the regime of the P.P.P. The village council has now provided first-class drainage facilities for the whole of Leguan and the strongest supporter who used to be a Member of the P.P.P. is now giving self-help work every day to make way for the dragline to operate to provide better drainage facilities.

5.25 p.m.

And this is why one of their members of the Council, Cecil Ramdass, has resigned from the P.P.P. and crossed the Floor to the P.N.C. The man said openly – and the Press reported him – that he was fed up with the P.P.P. and has now seen the wisdom and has seen that the policy of the P.N.C. is to develop the people, to raise the standard of living of the people and he decided to join and make his contribution with the P.N.C. *[Interruption by hon. Members]*

Mr. Speaker, they are talking about rigging of elections, they really, in fact, do not want elections because they can never win an election. There was an election in 1970; they could not contest the elections they had to withdraw from the elections because they could not have found candidates. Persons who they had earmarked to be candidates left them and what we are doing here is helping them. We are endeavouring to save them from being ashamed.

The hon. Member Mrs. Elinor DaSilva said the people do not have confidence in the local authorities and the Government. Yet last week she came in this House and said she was travelling along the West Coast Berbice and people stoned her and broke the windows of her

land rover. It is because the people have confidence in this Government and the local authorities that they go there to make unfounded criticisms. *[Interruption]*

The hon. Members opposite tell us about collecting of proxies. Nobody really collects proxies, because the time has not come to collect proxies. As a matter of fact, we do not need proxies to win an election, because they do not have supporters anymore. Hon. Members of the Opposition are engage in intimidating people all over the country. They are deciding to which cinema people must go, and at which shop they must buy. When people go to the cinemas the hon. Member Mr. Roshan Ally has a gang of school children stoning people's houses. This is what they are engaged in, destruction.

I thought that hon. Members would have come here and told us that they are going to examine what is going on in the areas, and advise the people to pay their rates and taxes because if people pay their rates and taxes development would take place rapidly. Instead, they join hands with the people who are reluctant to pay and instruct them to refuse to pay rates and taxes. Since there were many new areas created as local authorities and since new areas were incorporated even in the old local authorities and the towns, landlords are resisting and they are using various approaches through which they are permitted by the Act, some going to court and so on. The valuation of all the properties has not yet been completed. These areas are big and the valuation is going on, and no local authority can put a number of different sets of valuers in any one local authority. There must be one set.

It is hardly likely that the valuations would be completed before the middle of next year. We are undertaking to train the staff in the local authorities, training has started and it is still continuing and in next year's estimates of the local authorities, some of them have provided to have temporary staff so that the permanent staff can be relieved for a long period to undergo intensive training at places like the Critchlow Labour College and the Government Technical Institute.

Mr. Speaker, G.A.L.A. has enumerated the reasons for postponing these elections and it is on that basis the Government has decided to postpone the elections to give local authorities an opportunity to get the ball rolling. The Opposition is only trying to play for time by saying that they want an election and if an election is held to continue to tell people not to pay rates and taxes. The Government intends to give the present councillors who are dedicated and who are willing to carry out their responsibilities a chance. [**Mr. Ram Karran:** You said they are recalcitrant.”] There are some who are recalcitrants and nothing is wrong with telling them. We have repeatedly said that we have the courage to tell the P.N.C. councillors that they are not performing. Anyone who does not want to carry out his functions properly and who acts irresponsibly we have the courage to tell them that they either improve or they resign, that is all. But the Opposition cannot tell their people that.

Mr. Speaker, the reasons were enumerated by G.A.L.A. and I need not go over them. G.A.L.A. said there are agencies which are resisting paying rates and taxes. Valuation has not been completed and some which are completed already, the local authorities are not in a position to collect rates from them until next year. G.A.L.A. said that it wants the councillors who are willing to carry out their responsibilities to be given a chance of at least another year. The Government has therefore decided to accept the recommendations of G.A.L.A. because G.A.L.A. represents a larger number of people than the whole Opposition represents. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Sutton.

Mr. Sutton: Mr. Speaker, if this was a situation that one can get consolation in amusement we would all be going home very happy indeed. If the situation could have been described as an amusing one we might find some area of justification for what is taking place.

I sympathise with those, the hon. Minister of Home Affairs, the hon. Minister of Local Government, and how many other Ministers, I am not quite certain how many Ministers are responsible for certain portfolios now, I am a little bit mixed up on that score, but I must be guided by the authority of hon. Minister of Local Government Mr. Salim. I must assume that what he says is authentic from the Ministry and portrays what the Government would like a Minister to say. I was listening most intently to every word that he said in the hope that I would find some justification for the Government's action in bringing this Bill, but the Minister spent most of his time in telling us about other things.

What we wanted to hear was, in fact, why a Bill that took so long to work out – Dr. Marshall's recommendations came in 1955 – did not see the light of day until after 1968. The Minister considers it as good justification, the fact that the P.P.P., when it had an opportunity, failed to do anything. After a longer time having elapsed, the Government having had an opportunity to see what the P.P.P. failed to do, having analysed, I presume, why the P.P.P. failed to do it, and in the light of that information, took several years to bring a Bill in this field of operation. One does not take time to do something and then find it is done improperly. We were taught the longer a tree takes to mature, the longer and more beneficially it will live, but we wanted to hear some reason other than what we have seen in the press or elsewhere. Certainly this was no justification. They were condemnations rather than justifications for the reason for bringing this Bill.

I had hoped to hear something new from the hon. Minister. I know nothing about propaganda. I try to stick to facts. I read from yesterday's *Guyana Graphic*, "Suspension in National Interest by G.A.L.A." What their opinions, I discount, because opinions expressed by newspapers one has to be very suspicious of them, but what I do take the opportunity to quote is what they quote as the actual words of the President of G.A.L.A. and that is what I am particularly interested in.

Before we come to the hon. Minister's reasons, the Minister says they were pleased to accede to the request of G.A.L.A. to postpone the elections. It is the first time I have ever heard that people in any responsible type of Government are given the opportunity to apply to the Government to let them continue being inefficient, when the Government has the option of saying: that is what elections are for, if you have not been able to get through with what you were supposed to do, we will elect other people to carry on.

I ask, let us address our minds to the situation. Let us see what the President of G.A.L.A. I quoted as saying. If I am wrong, I am quoting the actual words he is supposed to have said. I will be following a mistake which this paper will have repeated. We see the President of G.A.L.A. said,

“I am anxious that local Government units strive towards maturity so as to prepare themselves for the day when the central government would evolve more powers and responsibilities upon them thus bringing them ore meaningfully into the development process.”

That is one section of his heavy pronouncement. We will set out to analyse. We know what the processes of Government are. We are told that the reason why there are elections is that the power of the country lies in the voting of the people and the people must be given an opportunity to say whether they are satisfied or not satisfied by the performance of any elected authority that is put to guide their affairs. What do the people find? The people find that the hon. Minister of Local Government is publicly reported, which he repeats in this House, as threatening to remove these councillors because they are disinterested, suffer lack of dedication, suffer inefficiency, plainly they do not have the interest of the people at heart, and this same Minister can come and tell us that they have decided not to hold elections, to give these dedicated councillors an opportunity to show their dedication. They have decided to waste time by permitting them to waste more time. I am trying to see if from the pronouncements of the persons, that should know what they are talking about, if we can elicit anything that makes sense to the normal thinking and analytical person.

We continue another paragraph that strikes my eye. Mr. McGowan by this article is reported as saying,

“With this objective in mind, I would be failing the entire nation if I condone the existence of lack of responsibility and lack of sense of dedication on the part of the councillors.”

He would be failing in his duty if he condones lack of responsibility and lack of dedication on the part of the councillors.

We would remember our good friend the President of G.A.L.A. a few weeks ago at a convention that was held in some part of the country, saying to these dedicated councillors how inefficient they were, and something would have to be done to get them to do their jobs properly. This was followed up by the hon. Minister of Local Government threatening to dissolve these councils, when a council turned up and they found, instead of a whole council, how many people turned up? Two. How are we to judge when statements on the same persons are diametrically opposite? They say something today, they accuse people of having no dedication, no public spirit, no sense of responsibility, and they come back and tell you, because they are decided, because they have a sense of responsibility, they have decided to extend their terms.

5.45 p.m.

Let us see if we can find any more smoke-screens of this nature. We find the Mr. McGowan is reported to have said:

“G.A.L.A.’s concept in the role of local government is one of partnership. G.A.L.A. initiated the recommendation after a number of visits throughout the country and observing at first-hand the problems facing many of the local authorities.”

What are we to understand by these remarks when Mr. McGowan said several areas in the country were visited and he appreciates the problems of the local authorities? Are we to assume

that they are permitted to continue without elections, that these problems will automatically disappear?

Is it not intended, the very spirit of the Elections Ordinance both for the central Government and the local Government, brother you have X years, two or three years or one year as the case may be, you are given a job to do, your duty is to do your best during the time at your disposal because at the end of that time you will be judged and other people will be made to take your place. If you are found efficient by the people who elected you you will be returned; if they consider you are inefficient you will be turned out. We are, of course, assuming that the electoral process is allowed to function as it is intended.

The Minister then tells us what is done at Port Mourant, what is done at Leguan and what is done wherever. This has nothing to do with the principle of holding elections. Are we to understand that you elect a council and they must go there and do nothing? Are we to understand that after two years a council must be unable to show a single thing that it has done? Are we to understand that after a length of time a council is not to be able to say, "Well, I did this, or I did that." It is interesting to note that the Mayor of Georgetown and I have no doubt the Mayor of New Amsterdam and I have no doubt the Mayor of New Amsterdam and I have no doubt that the principle would be copied by the Mayor that is and the Mayor to come at Linden. You have a bridge built in one year, you see L.F.S. written on it, meaning that it was built during the regime of that Mayor. Every Council wants to have something to show that they had an opportunity, and they must either do or fail to do. The fact that they have failed to do what excuse it is. We do not elect councillors and assume because they have not done anything, if you elect another council they will not continue to do? Is that an excuse for not holding elections? Is it an excuse to say that the councillors were put in six months late after the first set of councillors were nominated? Who was responsible for this?

Now, the hon. Minister and other persons had the temerity, and I call it real shamelessness to come to this House to say that G.A.L.A. represents more people than the

Opposition combined. They would not have the nerve to deny that there is no proxy collecting. But what is really paralyzing and terrifying is that the present Government assumes that the people of this country will continue to stomach this a morality and rascality because the people get a Government they deserve and I submit that the people of Guyana are being roughly used because a Government is being imposed on them that they do not in the least deserve. This Government will find out that the Laws of nature cannot be ignored and try to turn inside without serious complications. I may be dead, but the laws of nature will never change. They will find that at least this is something which is completely uncontrollable, and the people who they think they can control little do they know that they are sick at the stomach with the rascality that is going on.

What really appalls me is that Ministers and people in certain places – we know, I have heard it said, I was a youngster and I remember the Hitler regime say the bigger the lie the more often repeated, they will believe. This is the policy that this Government is carrying out. But we are thoroughly ashamed. I do not mind any Government which rules by majority provided it is properly and constitutionally arrived at. I am ashamed when I go abroad. This is what I am greeted with: “You come from Guyana? I saw that picture, ‘Making of a Prime Minister’ how the hell he gets away with that?” I am ashamed when I hear these things because unfortunately a lot of these things are facts. I know that, they know that too, some of them must have seen it too. It is no longer something to say, “Shut your mouth, you are talking nonsense”, because truth cannot be hidden forever. Okay. It is a necessary evil which I am not prepared to accept, it was a necessary evil helped by our allies to contain the communist. Nonsense! If people want communism, let them have it. If I am a minority I will either have to stick to the minority or get out of the country but you cannot falsify what people want, therefore – *[Interruption]*

That is the point. The hon. Minister Mr. Hoyte said: “I will do nothing about it.” But the laws of nature will be served in some mysterious way which I am not prepared to predict. All I will say is that rascality will not succeed forever. We hear, we know, but they are so brass-faced about it, they tell us no proxies are being signed. The real reason for these Local Government

Elections not coming off is not the fact that G.A.L.A., which is comprised of a pack of puppets suggested to the Government that they want efficiency, “Please, sir, let me have another year for my inefficiency.” Have you ever heard people begging to be replaced? And the Government has acceded to their request because they had not enough time to carry out what they could not carry out? I remember we debated the Local Government Bill, the Government is supposed to give this help and that help financially.

5.55 p.m.

These poor people saw and they realized that what they were counting on, the Government will exercise its power, which it has and which is worked into the Bill, to give them an allowance for being a councillor, “but brother we go, no nuts ain’t dropping, what I must waste my time there for?” This method they use to emasculate local government, by putting in hand-picked councillors, thereby making it virtually impossible for the Opposition to constructively suggest, it is now back on them, to find you need more talk, you need to select people who have a certain degree of maturity, a certain degree of dedication, a certain degree of responsibility.

I was hoping that when the hon. Minister of Local Government stood up to speak I would have heard something that possibly would make me do some rethinking. He speaks about the collection of rates and taxes. What the collection of rates and taxes has to do with running elections to elect new councillors? When the new councils are elected, they will continue to collect. What excuse is that? One of the tragic situations is that certain Ministers, even they are not in a position to appreciate what is happening around them. They have no appreciation of the true area of responsibility, because a Minister can get up and say here, because that is not done, that is proper. That is in fact the reason why elections must be held, because electorates will have a chance and councillors will know if they go in there, as these councillors have gone in there, sit on their ails and do nothing, warm their seats, that they will be thrown out, and they should have been thrown out.

I accept the people's authority to throw me out. I do not accept the authority for anybody to throw out anybody else by assuming powers which it was never intended that they should have. These things were thought out very carefully. They have not had the time to go in for the type of political gimmick that attracted votes as was done in 1968. I repeat a little story which you all know here, when my unfortunately handled friend, the hon. Member Mr. Cheeks, who was then the Minister of Local Government – it may be interesting for those who do not know it to hear it – went to D'Edward .

He saw that there was a culvert. Owing to the cultivation of the rice fields, which extended 200 or 300 per cent from the time when the culvert was put down, to give them water and take out water, every time rain fell those fields were flooded, and they were at the mercy of the weather whether the rice would be successful or not. What does Mr. Cheeks in his zeal do? He knows there is money for this but he did not realize with whom he was dealing. He recommends this culvert, but, "we do not have any money."

Next year, my worthy and honoured Prime Minister goes up to the same area. The people said, "You have a Minister of Local Government, he promised us this culvert since last year." He said, "He did this? I cannot understand how you did not get it." He comes down, the building of the culvert is started a week after. And election is a couple of months after. Unfortunately, they have been so pressed, left, right and centre, they had no time for political gimmicks of this nature. He would not have taken two years to discover that, because the Opposition, even if they had one member there, he would have seen that these representatives of his party were grossly inefficient, and they would have been tossed out long ago.

Let us examine what my colleague the hon. Member Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud touched on in this question that Government, after examination, was pleased to accept the recommendation of G.A.L.A. We know that these elections should be held between 1st October and 7th December. We all read in the papers when the G.A.L.A. recommendation was supposed to have reached the Government. I underline it if the Government in fact had any real intention

of holding elections for local government, as it should have, the Government would have had to start laying Orders on this matter to get certain things regulated well before the G.A.L.A. found fit to recommend that the elections be postponed. That would not convince a six year old.

The hon. Minister said that they represent about 60 of the authorities, therefore they represent more people than the Opposition. Let us assume that is right. I quoted Mr. McGowan, if I am wrong, I apologise to him but I have no doubt that he did say so because the Minister repeated it himself, that these people, no good, suffer from lack of dedication, and they should not be there and they will see they have to do better. This applies to sixty of these local authorities, some of these poor fellows do not know how they got there because the decision to go there was not made by them but by the top brass of the party.

It is slowly unfolding itself, as all parties eventually find out, if you pick all the time, yes men, you have to cut off their heads, put your head in their place, think for them, or else they do nothing and that is the problem the P.N.C. has now. They are looking out for somebody to say whether they must say yes or no and unfortunately the lines of communication are not sufficient in order to get the noes and yeses to the people who are incapable of thinking for themselves. Brother, we put you there, but what they did not understand, they went there, thought they would get honey or soup but nothing coming forth, and so they say: what I am doing here? I am not turning up for any meeting. They are glad for somebody else to be put. It would make them look ridiculous by changing whole councils at a time when those councils are little more than nominated councils and all they are doing here is perpetuating what they themselves accepted, the vicious system of nominated Government.

Inefficient people are permitted to continue. Give them hell one week and next week come and say: these are my efficient, dedicated boys and therefore I want them to continue for another two years. If we look further, we will see they started off very badly. They showed a slight improvement after they had the benefit of attending seminars. Am I to understand that the level of intelligence of these people is so low they had no conception whatsoever of their

obligations that they had to attend seminars to tell them what were the rules of the council for which they accepted nomination?

It is a fact they cannot control their councils except they have the elections, as they did the last time, so arranged through votes, or impossible time factors, proxies, dead people voting, and all sort of thing, and it is a massive operation. I am one of the naïve people who used to say that rigging is for those undeveloped savage countries, but I saw with my lovely blue eyes, votes coming out of a box with rubber bands around them.

6.05 p.m.

Because I was so colonialised that I could not believe that a thing like that would have happened here.

I want honesty for Guyanese. Whoever wants to be at the top it does not bother me in the least, but they must get on top legally and constitutionally so that when I leave this country I can look people in the eyes and I could say that Government got itself constitutionally elected.

I am one who today as I stand here I am deeply ashamed that this Government talks about postponing elections when it knows that it is bound to be criticized. When the hon. Minister of Home Affairs was moving this Motion he was a picture of embarrassment because he had to anticipate that he would not be allowed to move such a Motion without being reminded of the dead people, those who did not exist, the 15 – year olds that caused this situation to rise. The Minister of Local Government may have been less embarrassed if, in fact, some of the 15 – year olds were members of the Councils because those members that they had certainly acted like 7 – year olds.

This is a situation that does not lend itself to levity. Whether we like it or not we are Guyanese when we leave this country, except a person who does not have self respect, we cannot

enjoy our country or Government being adversely criticized by Tom, Dick, Mary, Jane and Elizabeth. I am not interested in “isms”, I am interested in what is good for Guyana. I want to see a level of probity in this country where elections and constitutional arrangements are concerned, and if the majority wants to go to hell or heaven with communism they go with my blessings, and if I find they are enjoying themselves I might go with them. *[Laughter]*

If the P.N.C. with their co-operative socialism could ever prove that their policies are right I myself will one day say, “Boy you got results, I am coming with you.” But it must be honestly done, and properly carried out and you must be able to look people in the eye, not terrorising people when they do not want to give you a proxy. This is the only country in the world where one man can legitimately exercise 4 votes and they started off with six but somebody told them, “This thing looks too shameful, make it three,” and we have three proxies. When they ask me “You mean you do not have to produce a doctor’s certificate to have a proxy?” a person must say it does not suit them to vote. Where are we going?

My dear, sir, I am ashamed of this situation and I will continue to make noise. I would admire any Government, help it to carry out any policy even if I am in the minority but it must be honestly pursued, faithfully rendered and the object must be without any doubt at all, for the good of the people as a whole no matter how misguided that policy is. But where you postpone an elections because your rigging machinery is not in order, for your puppets where you press them and they go where ever you want them to go, you are surely trying to create in yourself a master Government, a master class, a single party and to hell with what the Opposition thinks we have no where to go. But I warn this Government a single party government will never be accepted in this country.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Harry Lall

Mr. Lall: Your Honour, I must say that I am in sympathy with the Minister of Local Government because maybe he was day dreaming when he was saying that G.A.L.A. represents

more people than the Opposition put together. The other point the hon. Minister made was that he thought the Opposition would have made constructive criticisms. I should like to ask the hon. Minister what he terms constructive criticism. Is it parroting like G.A.L.A. by parroting like His Worship the Mayor of Linden, like parroting from all the other councillors? Is this the type of constructive criticisms the hon. Minister wants? If this is the kind of criticism he wants, low and behold I should like to tell him that we are not the type that will dance to his tune. Let him go to the phantoms who voted at the last elections. Let him go to the dead who voted at the last elections they probably will join with him and criticize constructively, because only the dead can see like him.

Sir, the Minister of Home Affairs in his opening remarks said that this is a simple Bill and he hopes the Opposition does not bring extraneous matters before the House.

6.15 p.m.

I know what we will say will not be tasteful to the Ministers' hearing, but this measure before the House is a measure to thwart the democratic rights of the citizens of Guyana, and as such, when we debate such a measure, we have to look at all the pros and cons before we make a decision. If this House had been operating in a democratic manner I would have assured you, Your Honour, after we from the Opposition had made our contribution, we would have got the majority to vote with us, but I know that even the Minister on that side of the House knows fully well it is undemocratic to postpone an election.

This should have happened when the Bill was introduced in this House to extend the life of councils. This should have been in the local government Act, that the life of the local authority should be four years instead of two years. I say four years because I know they will come back for another further postponement and, sir, I will show you in a minute why and how. There must be cause and effect in the introduction of this measure in the house. There could be no excuse whatsoever that this Government has not got full control of the local government

machinery. If this could not be denied, then why couldn't the P.N.C. and its councillors fulfil their pledges given during the electioneering campaign at the last local government elections?

His worship the Mayor of Linden stated thus, and I quote, Your Honour, from the *Evening Post*, page 6, November 29, 1972. This is where the Mayor was speaking to the citizens of Linden on his tour of Western Germany, of the education he got from visiting Western Germany. In conclusion, the Mayor dealt with the decision of G.A.L.A., but he put on a little frill before he came to the real subject matter, and this is what the Mayor stated:

“Citizens will no doubt have realized that our rate of progress on the reconstruction of Burnham Drive has slowed down considerably. This is due partly to the weather but primarily to the unavailability of road making equipment and material that your Council seeks to hire or purchase. Council has been losing hard earned money simply because it cannot get the services of bitumen distributor to lay on the prime coating.”

Making mention of what the Mayor said, that the Council could not get material and machinery, it is obvious before any concern embarks on a project it should first gather the material and the machinery and make sure that it has everything in hand before it starts the construction. For the Mayor to state that hard-earned money was wasted, this is gross inefficiency on the part of the council. The council cannot be forgiven for this. It is obvious if one is put to look after the affairs of the citizens of an area, one must know what one is doing and, therefore, the Mayor and the councillors of that area should have known that they must have all the materials and the machinery at hand first before they start the construction of Burnham Drive.

6.25 p.m.

Your Honour, I want to continue quoting His Worship the Mayor of Linden:

“Your Council has noted and given consideration to public reaction in the address by the President of GALA seeking the suspension of Local Government Elections for one year. The Council supports GALA. This Council feels that it would be extremely unwise that these elections be held this year in that matter before the next national elections.”

The Mayor fortunately or unfortunately has let the cat out of the bag. He stated that the national elections should be held first. This is from the horse’s mouth, because if a person is selected as Mayor for a place like Linden then that person is high up in the P.N.C., and if this statement has come from the lips of that individual then, Your Honour, it is truly an indication of what is to come.

I should like to quote His Worship the Mayor again:

“Councillors elected at the last Local Government Elections have not really had a fair opportunity to show their colour or to implement their development programmes. This is due, no doubt to the new and somewhat strange situation in which they found themselves and which obviously took some time to grapple and to understand.”

My God! Two years these people cannot understand, they cannot grapple with the situation – and I am only referring to one local government area so as to show you what is the motive and the kind of people who were selected by this Government and the excuse that is now being made. Now is it in the name of justice that men of integrity, men of intelligence cannot cope, cannot understand, cannot grapple with a situation, or cannot understand the functions of a local authority? This, to my mind, is square pegs being put in round holes and you must have mal-administration. This is the situation existing in all the local government areas in this country.

Mr. Speaker: Are you going to be much longer, hon. Member?

Mr. Lall: Yes, sir.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Leader of the house please move the Adjournment Motion.

30.11.72

National Assembly

6.25 – 6.30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

“**Resolved**”, That this Assembly do stand adjourned to Friday, 1st December, 1972 at 2 p.m. [Miss Field-Ridley]

Adjourned accordingly at 6.30 p.m.
