

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2007) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

38th Sitting

14:00h

Thursday 27 December 2007

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)

Speaker (1)

The Hon Hari N Ramkarran SC, MP

Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government (42)

People's Progressive Party/Civic (41)

The United Force (1)

The Hon Samuel A A Hinds MP

(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)

*Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and
Communications - (AOL)*

The Hon Clement J Rohee MP

Minister of Home Affairs

The Hon Shaik K Z Baksh MP

Minister of Education

The Hon Dr Henry B Jeffrey MP

Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation

The Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy MP

(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)

Minister of Health

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The Hon Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett MP

(R# 9 - U Takutu/U Esseq)

Minister of Amerindian Affairs

*The Hon Dr Ashni Singh MP

Minister of Finance

*The Hon S Rudolph Insanally OR, CCH, MP

Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt MP

Minister of Housing and Water

The Hon Robert M Persaud MP

(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)

Minister of Agriculture

The Hon Dr Jennifer R A Westford MP

(R#7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Minister of the Public Service

The Hon Kellawan Lall MP

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

*The Hon Doodnauth Singh SC, MP - (AOL)

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

The Hon Dr Frank C S Anthony MP

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

The Hon B H Robeson Benn MP

Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

**The Hon Manzoor Nadir MP

Minister of Labour

The Hon Priya D Manickchand MP

(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Minister of Human Services and Social Security

The Hon Dr Desrey Fox MP

Minister in the Ministry of Education

The Hon Bheri S Ramsaran MD, MP

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Minister in the Ministry of Health

*Non-elected Minister **Elected Member from TUF

The Hon Jennifer I Webster MP - (AOL)

Minister in the Ministry of Finance

The Hon Manniram Prashad MP

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

Mr Donald Ramotar MP

The Hon Gail Teixeira MP - (AOL)

Mr Harripersaud Nokta MP

Mrs Indranie Chandarpal MP

Ms Bibi S Shadick MP

(R# 3 – Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Mr Mohamed Irfaan Ali MP

Mr Albert Atkinson JP, MP - (AOL)

(R# 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)

Mr Komal Chand CCH, JP, MP

(R# 3 - Essiquibo Is/W Demerara)

Mr Bernard C DeSantos SC, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs Shirley V Edwards JP, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr Mohamed F Khan JP, MP

(R# 2 - Pomeroron/Supenaam)

Mr Odinga N Lumumba MP - (AOL)

Mr Moses V Nagamootoo JP, MP - (AOL)

Mr Mohabir A Nandlall MP

Mr Neendkumar JP, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

*** Mr Steve P Ninvalle MP

Parliamentary Secretary

Mr Parmanand P Persaud JP, MP

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(R# 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury CCH, JP, MP

Parliamentary Secretary

***Non-elected Member

***Mrs Pauline R Sukhai MP

Parliamentary Secretary

Mr Dharamkumar Seeraj MP

Mr Norman A Whittaker MP - *(AOL)*

(R# 1 - Barima/Waini)

Members of the Opposition (28)

(i) People's National Congress Reform 1-Guyana (22)

Mr Robert HO Corbin

Leader of the Opposition

Mr Winston S Murray CCH, MP

Mrs Clarissa S Riehl MP

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Mr E Lance Carberry MP

Chief Whip

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer MP

Mr Anthony Vieira *(Absent)*

Mr Basil Williams MP

Dr George A Norton MP

Mrs Volda A Lawrence MP

Mr Keith Scott MP

Miss Amna Ally MP

Mr James K McAllister MP - *(AOL)*

Mr Dave Danny MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr Aubrey C Norton MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr Ernest B Elliot MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

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Miss Judith David-Blair MP

(R# 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr Mervyn Williams MP

(Re# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Ms Africo Selman MP

Dr John Austin MP

(R# 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)

Ms Jennifer Wade MP

(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Ms Vanessa Kissoon MP

(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)

Mr Desmond Fernandes MP

(Region No 1 – Barima/Waini)

(ii) Alliance For Change (5)

Mr Raphael G Trotman MP

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan MP - *(Absent)*

Mrs Sheila VA Holder MP

Ms Latchmin Budhan Punalall MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr David Patterson MP

(iii) Guyana Action Party/Rise Organise and Rebuild (1)

Mr Everall N Franklin MP

OFFICERS

Mr Sherlock E Isaacs

Clerk of the National Assembly

Mrs Lilawatie Coonjah

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

PRAYERS

[Clerk reads Prayers]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

(i) Security at the Public Buildings

Honourable Members, in order to improve the security situation at the Public Buildings, I have directed that two gates be installed at the eastern and western entrances of the lower corridor of the Public Buildings. With immediate effect, these gates will be locked and only opened on days of Sitting of the National Assembly. Two of the gates at the main stairway, will also be closed and only opened on days of Sitting.

(2) Reception For MPs

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Honourable Members, there will be a reception for M.Ps at the end of today's Sitting; so I would therefore be grateful for you all to be there and the Press is also invited.

(3) Assassination of Mrs Benazir Bhutto - Expression of condolences to the Government and People of Pakistan

Honourable Members, I take this opportunity sadly to inform you and you must have known already of the assassination of Mrs Benazir Bhutto, a former Prime Minister of Pakistan. I would like to express on my own behalf, and I am sure on behalf of all Members of the National Assembly, our condolences to the Government and people of Pakistan. I will ask the Clerk to convey those sentiments to the appropriate authority.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS:

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Finance

Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: Mr Speaker, I beg to present fourteen documents listed as items (a) to (n) under my name in relation to Loan Agreements to which the Government of Guyana is a Party:

- (a) Dollar Credit Line Agreement between the Export-Import Bank of India and the Government of Guyana signed on 7 November 2006 for US \$2,100,000 for funding of the Traffic Signaling System Project;

- (b) Exchange of Notes signed on 10 November 2006 between the Government of Japan and the Government of Guyana regarding 100% cancellation of eligible commercial debt of the Government of Guyana to the Government of Japan for US \$591,326.98 on the basis of the conclusions reached in the agreed Minute during the consultations between the representatives of the Government of Guyana and the Government of the creditor countries concerned held in Paris on 14 January 2004;

- (c) Debt Forgiveness Agreement signed on 23 November 2006 between the Government of the Republic of Cuba and the Government of Guyana to cancel the debt which originated as a result of a Credit Agreement signed on 18 March 1986 between the former Guyana National Co-operative Bank (GNCB) and Banco Nacional de Cuba (BNC) for an amount

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of US \$1,471,319.07 to finance Cuban exports of pharmaceutical products and the subsequent Amendment signed on 15 May 1994;

- (d) Dollar Credit Line Agreement between the Export-Import Bank of India and the Government of Guyana signed on 11 November 2004 for US \$19,000,000.00 for the Construction of a Cricket Stadium;

- (e) Loan Contract No. 1752/SF-GY between the Government of Guyana and the Inter-American Development Bank signed on 31 January 2007 for US \$19,800,000 for the Citizen Security Programme;

- (f) Loan Contract No. 1730/SF-GY between the Government of Guyana and the Inter-American Development Bank signed on 22 February 2007 for US \$18,070,000 for the Georgetown Solid Waste Management Programme (GSWMP);

- (g) Guarantee and Counter-Guarantee Contract No. 1731/SF-GY between the Government of Guyana and the Inter-American Development

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Bank signed on 22 February 2007 for US \$2,500,000 for the Government Solid Waste Management Programme (GSWMP);

- (h) Loan Contract No. 1745/SF-GY between the Government of Guyana and the Inter-American Development Bank signed on 20 March 2007 for US \$15,000,000 for the Modernisation of the Justice Administration System (Policy-Based Component);

- (i) Loan Contract No. 1746/SG-GY between the Government of Guyana and the Inter-American Development Bank signed on 23 March 2007 for US \$10,000,000 for the Modernisation of the Justice Administration System (Investment Component);

- (j) Loan Contract No. 1750/SF-GY between the Government of Guyana and the Inter-American Development Bank signed on 20 March 2007 for US \$18,000,000 to support the Competitiveness Programme (Policy-Based Component);

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- (k) Loan Contract No 1751/SF-GY between the Government of Guyana and the Inter-American Development Bank signed on 20 March 2007 for US \$9,000,000 to support the Competitiveness Programme (Investment Component);

- (l) Loan Contract No. 1803/SF-GY between the Government of Guyana and the Inter-American Development Bank signed on 11 July 2007 for US \$27,000,000 for the Transport Infrastructure Rehabilitation Programme.

- (m) Protocol on Remitting the Debt of the Guyanese Government owed to the Chinese Government of signed on 10 July 2007 between the Government of Guyana and the Government of the People's Republic of China for an amount totalling Renmimbi Yuan 107,206,060.43 and Pounds Sterling 610,000 (equivalent to approximately US \$15,275,496);

- (n) Sales Contract No. SA 131122 and Internal Approval Document No. VOP-2007-DOC between the PDVSA Petroleo, SA (PDVSA) and Guyana Energy Agency (GEA) signed on 23 January 2007 to supply the Government of

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Guyana with crude oil, refined oil products and LPG of up to 5,200 barrels per day on an annual basis;

- (o) Financial Paper No. 3/2007 - Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totaling \$1,459,063,444 for the period 2007-11-21 to 2007-12-21;

- (p) Financial Paper No. 4/2007 - Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$7,939,310,524 for the period ending 2007-12-31.

Mr Speaker, I further beg to name 3 January 2008 as the date for consideration of the aforementioned Financial Papers.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

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By Mrs Amna Ally MP (Chairperson of the
Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services:

*The Second Periodic Report of the
Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on
Social Services*

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Speaker: Honourable Members, there is only one question on the Order Paper for a written reply and the answer is therefore in accordance with our Standing Order being circulated.

Member Asking: Mrs Sheila V Holder MP

What is the status of the Government's alternative energy programme and specifically on the following:

- (a) Wind-mill project government was perusing at Hope?
- (b) Hydro-electric scheme at Amelia Falls;
and
- (c) Alternate energy programme?

**Written reply submitted by the Prime Minister and
Minister of Public Works and Communications:**

Government remains committed to fostering the development of energy by private developers/investors from renewable resources including wind, solar, biomass and hydro and endorses the benefits associated with alternative energy sources viz:

- Reduction in global warming and the greenhouse gas effect;
- Reduction in foreign exchange associated with the importation of fuel;
- Reduced dependency on fossil fuel and protection from unpredictable and rising fuel prices on the world market; and
- Promotion of a green image

Our current laws allow for fiscal incentives to apply for importation of equipment used for renewable energy projects.

- (a) With regard to development of wind power, Government entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with DELTA CARIBBEAN NV of Curacao in October 2001, which granted the developer exclusive rights to conduct feasibility studies and wind measurements at Hope Beach. The developer fulfilled the objectives of the MOU and is currently negotiating a Power Purchase Agreement with the Guyana Power and Light Inc., including price for power and other technical requirements.

The wind farm is expected to have 13.5 MW of power installed and its production will average approximately one-third of that capacity which will be sold to the national grid. In addition, the developers will finance part of the 69 KV transmission line. Commercial Operation Date for the wind power is fourteen months from the date of contract signing which is anticipated by mid 2008.

- (b) Synergy Holdings Inc., headed by an overseas based Guyanese has demonstrated sustained

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interest for more than (10) years in developing the Amalia Falls Hydro-electric Project (AFHEP). In July 2002, Synergy Holdings was granted the rights to develop the AFHEP under the terms of an Interim Licence which currently expires in April 2008. The Interim Licence requires Synergy Holdings to complete certain activities, including negotiation of engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract and conclude financial closing and pre-closing activities for the development of the AFHEP prior to the grant of a Final Licence. The project constitutes the development of a 100 MW hydroelectric power plant to supply electricity to the national grid and 296 kilometers high voltage transmission line.

Synergy Holdings has associated with Sithe Global which is part of the Blackstone Group. That Group will continue financial resources (equity) and technical expertise. Government has set a deadline of August 2008 for 2008 financial closing. The construction period is expected to last three (3) years from financial closing. There are certain perceived risks which are being monitored namely:

- Escalating capital cost is threatening the viability of the project; and

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- While equity funding is principally in place - total financing for the Project is to be determined.

In addition to the Amalia Falls Hydroelectric Project, Government has

also received considerable interest in the development of the Country's hydro power resources. The attached spreadsheet (see APPENDIX) provides information on possible exploitation of certain sites.

- (c) Other alternative energy programmes include development of solar systems. The support offered by Government has resulted in increased installation of photovoltaic systems, particularly in hinterland communities. Some of the more recent assistance provided by or planned by Government include:

- Under the Unserved Areas Electrification Programme - Hinterland Project preparation Component, solar home systems will be installed on each residence and communal building in:

- Capoey - Region 2 (62 systems);

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- Muritareo - Region 10 (69 systems);
- Kurukabaru - Region 8 (104 systems); and
- Yarikita - Region 1 (104) systems.

The sustainability of these systems will be assessed over a 6 - 12 months period and if the results proved positive, solar systems will be installed in additional communities.

- Installation of a 2400 watts photovoltaic system in Wauna to enhance economic activity, particularly relating to peanut production.
- One 1500 watts, 120 VAC photovoltaic system was installed at the Kato Health Post in August 2005. This system provides electric lightening on the inside and on the outside of the building and power outlets for the operation of medical equipment.

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- In December 2004, one 1500 watts photovoltaic system was installed at the Multipurpose Hall in Paruima, Region 7. That system provides lighting to enhance economic activities.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

(i) GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILL - Second Readings

**ITEM 1 - NATIONAL REGISTRATION
(AMENDMENT) BILL 2007 - Bill No.
27/2007 published on 2007-12-05**

*A Bill intituled, an Act to amend the
National
Registration Act*

Honourable Minister of Health, I understand you will move the Second reading in place of the Honourable Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs.

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Yes, Mr Speaker. The Attorney General is on leave for this Sitting and has asked me to present the Second reading of the National Registration (Amendment) Bill - Bill No. 27/2007.

This is a simple Amendment Bill and it is one that has been derived out of an Agreement. We all agree that we need a new Voters' Law and that that new Voters' Law should be derived out of a House-to-House Registration.

Previously, in an amendment to allow for continuous registration, we had removed a provision for House-to-House Registration. This Bill seeks to re-insert the mechanism of House-to-House Registration to allow the establishment of a database, which consequently allows for continuous registration. There will be much debate on this issue.

On 13 June this year, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Mr Corbin, met with the President and I think, the Honourable Member Mr Carberry, was present at that Meeting; also Dr Roger Luncheon was present. An agreement was reached for a House-to-House Registration. The Guyana Elections Commission has indicated that it is now ready to proceed with House-to-House Registration, beginning 7 January. This Bill paves the way for GECOM to proceed with House-to-House Registration.

Clauses (2) and (3) of this Amendment Bill allow for that House-to-House Registration to occur and also for the continuous registration to proceed.

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Clause (4) is a standard provision in many of our Legislations. We have had them in the past.

In the Elections Law (Amendment) Act No.15/2000, these provisions were present.

These provisions were also present in the old Local Authorities Elections Act, Chapter 28:03 - Bill No. 23/1969.

In Act No. 22/1990, the Local Democratic Organs Elections Act, these provisions were also present and they were present in the Representation of the People's (Amendment) Act No.30/1990.

This is a very simple Bill that allows the Guyana Elections Commission to proceed with House-to-House Registration and for the establishment of a new Voters' List, which will facilitate the Local Government Election. I think there is a general agreement on this and therefore, Mr Speaker, we on this side of the House are presenting this Bill so that the Elections Commission could proceed with its work.

It is my pleasure therefore, on behalf of the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs to ask that this Amendment Bill be read for the Second time.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member.

Motion proposed.

Mr Basil Williams: Mr Speaker, the stated intention of this Bill is House-to-House Registration and it is the product of our struggles on this side of the House for an acceptable Voters' List over the years.

Indeed, it is strongly felt, not only by us that the last several elections were attended by a not so acceptable List. It is to be hoped that unlike the House-to-House Registration promised before the last Election; you know that was watered down to House-to-House Verification and that House-to-House Verification was reduced into the National Registration (Amendment) Act No. 14/2005 - actually the Legislation - but unfortunately it never saw the light of day. So, we are saying unlike what happened with that, we would hope that the promised House-to-House Registration in this Bill would see better days than its predecessor.

A natural concomitant to this House-to-House Registration and indeed an integral part of it is the issuance of new ID cards. Coupled with the issuance of new ID cards would be the decommissioning of the existing ID cards. In the spirit of the yuletide season, we do not want to delve into those areas, but we all understand what were the facts in relation to the ill-use of ID cards on the last occasion. We recognise under the law, we could not talk about new House-to-House Registration without also speaking about new Voter ID cards or whatever ID cards - National ID cards or whatever ID cards that ought to be undertaken for the purposes.

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What is important is that the production of new ID cards must be within the domain of GECOM, because GECOM has this constitutional dispensation over the administrative conduct of elections and therefore no other party should arrogate that power to themselves neither should GECOM abdicate its responsibility to the people of this nation.

It is so important, the maintenance of the independence of an institution like GECOM; which independence is guaranteed in our Constitution; that we be wary of efforts to whittle down such independence.

The Honourable Member Dr Ramsammy, mentioned that Clause (4) is a standard provision and purported to regale us with previous legislation or existing legislation in which similar provisions are in here. The fact of the matter is, if I might respectfully refer you to Act No. 15/2000, Section 20 (2) ... there is a similar provision there, but that provision is minus these words that are proposed in this new Clause (4), that is,

if any difficulty arises in connection with the application of this principal Act, as amended by this Act, or any provisions of this Act, the Elections Commission may

and these are the relevant words:

after consultation with the Minister by order make any provision that appears to be

necessary or expedient for removing the difficulties.

For the first time, what is creeping into the legislation is the requirement for independent GECOM, to first consult with a Minister of Government before it goes about executing its constitutional mandate and we cannot agree with the abridgement of any such power in relation to the independence of GECOM. So, we do not agree it is a standard provision. It is a standard provision minus GECOM being subjected to consultation with the Minister before acting.

Now, Mr Speaker, I agree with the interpretation of Clause (2), but I should add that that is in addition to House-to-House Registration. It also provides the option of persons going to GECOM Offices to make application. In other words, what has begun is the restoration of the original provisions in the National Registration Act, when you add both House-to-House Provision and House-to-House-Visit, and also for persons to visit GECOM Offices in cases of slippages.

What is important is Clause 9(1). We must be very clear that it constitutes database. The only relevant thing about the original of the Registration Record must be the data; the information contained in those Registration Records. As presently drafted that is not clear. It means then, when you read how this is drafted, what you have is the setting up of the database and the original of the Registration Record. It means then that you could be opening the gate for other data to go into this database other than the information gathered from the

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expected House-to-House Registration. To me, you have to be very careful and we think that that Section ought to be made clearer by re-arranging the words to read *that the Commission shall establish a special register which shall consist of a computerised database of information contained in the original of the registration record*. We have to guard against other data going into the computerised database, which really should only be, the combination of the House-to-House Registration exercise.

Finally, a vestige, a relic from the last elections exercise, Section 6(A), big A as we call it, Act No.14/ 2005, no attempt was made to remove that provision from the Act. If you would recall, Section 6(A) (big A) of Act No.14/ 2005 reads thus:

The Elections Commission had used Official List of Electors from the 2001 General and Regional Elections, as the basis to commence continuous registration.

This obviously has been overtaken, but it should not be left in the Act and so, it is our desire to remove all doubts that Section 6(A) (big A), ought to be deleted from the provisions of the National Registration (Amendment) Act so that we would not have anything to do whatsoever, with any Official List from the 2001 General and Regional Elections.

With those few admonitions, Mr Speaker, the PNCR-1G would have no reservation in concurring with the package, taking into account the revised proposal; we will have no difficulty in supporting this package of this Bill... Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

Honourable Member Mr Donald Ramotar

Mr Donald R Ramotar: Mr Speaker, I also rise to support this Bill, which is very necessary, for us to compile the new Voters' List for us to have Elections, whether it be National or Local Government.

I would also like to take the opportunity to correct my friend, the Honourable Member Mr Williams, when he said that this is the result of the struggles for a clean list. I want to just tell him that that struggle was completed since 1992. *[Applause]* The PNCR of course, had nothing at all to do with that; in fact we had to fight against them to have this corrected in a proper way.

I would like also to say that not only did we have free and fair Elections since 1992, but we have had verified free and fair Elections since 1992, not only from the people of Guyana, but by international organisations who had no interest; they were disinterested in the result of the Elections and only wanted to see a free and fair Election. Our Election itself had gone through a lot of examination. You recall, Sir, in 1997 we had a forensic examination of the Elections and the conclusion of that Team was that we found not a single fraudulent vote. That is recorded in the Report; maybe you do not read the Report and you have those Reports. So, Mr Speaker, I just want to say that, the struggle that Mr Williams spoke about, it

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was we who carried out that struggle and we who successfully completed that struggle. *[Applause]*

On the issue of the new ID cards, Sir, let me just say that this sometimes seems to be coming like a bolt from the clear blue sky, because over the period of time, we never had a single complaint. I am not against a new ID card, but not to create reasons or manufacture excuses for these things. All I am saying is that, we have never had a single complaint, we have never had any kind of problems with the ID card we have had before. Sometimes it worries me, because I think at the last, we had one of the discussions before now, one Member mentioned here that our Elections were the second more expensive elections in the world per capita. Sometimes I wonder if the intention is not to create some type of fatigue in spending money for the Election purposes. Because, here is a case, where we never had a single complaint about these ID cards, but now our friends on the other side, seem to want to make this a big issue and as a poor country, we have to be considering cost. We cannot behave as if our resources are inexhaustible and we can go in the backyard and pick money off a tree. So these are things we have to keep in mind. Also Sir, we have to remember, we do not sometimes, like I said, at one previous occasion, every time you satisfy the Opposition, they make another demand. I just want to remind this House that this House, before the 1997 Elections, all of us unanimously voted for Voters' ID card; we all agreed unanimously that we should have a Voters' ID card to conduct elections. Lo and behold, after the elections that became an issue to go to Court to say that the elections were unconstitutional.

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Mr Speaker, as far as GECOM's independence is concerned, again I think, since 1992 with the Carter formula that the Elections Commission has enjoyed a great freedom of action in conducting election, registration and everything else. I think the Opposition has been so happy with the freedom and independence of the Elections Commission that they have been the ones, who suggested at the level of the Constitutional Reform Commission that we constitutionalised it. Probably we are the only country in the world, where we put our electoral system, how it should be run within our Constitution itself - something that is more administrative.

I would also say that the Chairman of the Elections Commission, previous Chairpersons, this Chairman and the Elections Commission, are on record on more than one occasions to say that they never experience any interference in the conduct of their work from the PPP/C Government.

Mr Speaker, I believe this is a necessary piece of Legislation to facilitate the work of the Elections Commission, so that we can have, as we have been struggling for a long time, immediately or as soon as possible, Local Government Elections and with the continuous registration in place, for us to have a free and fair 2011 Elections, something I hope, that this time, our friends would not find any excuse, when we defeat them again. Thank you for your attention. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member, Mr Trotman

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, I wish to just make a short statement and intervention this afternoon and to say that the Alliance For Change supports this legislation, because we recognise that it is one of the imperators that must be met if we are to have elections of any kind in the future, which can be deemed to be free, fair and transparent.

I would have expected that we would have had a very brief discussion. I heard Minister Ramsammy say that Messrs Carberry and Corbin met at the Office of the President with the President and Dr Luncheon and agreed to this Legislation, and then I heard the Honourable Member Mr Williams say that he had great difficulty with some of its Clauses and one is left to wonder what is going on behind these closed doors. Because if in fact they agreed to bring the legislation today, then it would have been a foregone conclusion that we would have accepted it and move on. It then brings to mind the point and I wish to reiterate it, that there is obviously a need for a third umpire or a third party must be involved. If we leave these two alone to work out things and when they think they have agreement and they bring what they believe to be the agreement here and then they still differ, well then something is obviously wrong.

I listened to Honourable Member Mr Ramotar as he sought to reshape some of the historical facts, which transpired over the last ten years. As one of the Co-counsels representing Esther Perriera, I do not know whether he has a copy of that decision, but the learned trial judge did find *numerous and massive fraud* to use her words - yes, those were her words.

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And the other thing I wish to remind him about is notwithstanding what anybody or persons, men and women, get together in this House and decide upon, that is why we have our Court of Law, to strike down what could be deemed to be unconstitutional and an unlawful act of Parliament. So, while there may have been a good idea to have an ID card that ID card system was deemed to be unconstitutional.

Mr Speaker, to press the issue of ID cards, I have in my hand an ID card of a person, which is flawed and for the last five years this person had been trying to erase it. So to say that there has never been an issue, a single issue regarding ID cards is to be disingenuous.

I know of an instance that I speak about often and I will take my full time, where a relative of mine happened to be a delivery man for a certain courier service and he went to a certain address in Guyana; I would not say where; we might embarrass Mr Ramotar, and upon arrival with the barrel, the goodly lady came out and she asked in whose name the barrel come; because she had three different ID cards and three different names or aliases; she had an ID card to suit each name; and when it was that she saw the writing on the barrel, she shuffled through the pack and produced the ID card to suit.

For us to sit here today and say that there are no problems whatsoever with the ID cards is for us to bury our heads in the sand. I know we are capable of far better. Mr Speaker, I am not by any means casting aspersions on anyone. Without anyone giving an instruction or without anyone giving a mandate, people on their own, whether for reasons of fraud - as a lawyer I know that - for criminal acts, to commit electoral

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crimes on others, take it upon themselves to do things which they believe would either influence the candidates of their choice or hamper the person or party they do not choose.

We therefore welcome this Bill and hope that after this Act has been passed, we can begin the process by saying that we do have a transparent list.

And again, the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar said that this Bill is necessary and I agree with him. Eight or ten months ago when there was a struggle to get this on, it was not necessary. We were told that it was superfluous and we need not have this Bill, but nonetheless, I welcome the fact that at the end of the year, on this good day of 27 December, we can come here and debate this Bill and pass it.

I wish to end, Mr Speaker, by saying that this Bill no doubt will strengthen the democratic process.

Mr Speaker, if you would give me this one indulgence, this morning I was shocked to see the breaking news of the assassination of the former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who now struggles for the return of democracy in Pakistan, now one of the Opposition Leaders and I believe that we at the end of this year, must take some note of the fact that while in other countries, they have descended into anarchy and violence now characterises the practice of politics ... *[Interruption: 'We should celebrate that.']* ... exactly ... that we should take time ... I agree with Minister Persaud, to celebrate our fledgling democracy, strengthen it, build on it and ensure that legislation like this, once passed, is adhered to,

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is followed and is honoured, not in disobedience, but in its acceptance and implementation. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Labour

Hon Manzoor Nadir: Mr Speaker, apart from the jobs which the Honourable Member Mr Williams threw at this side of the House, I say that this Bill is non-controversial.

I want to respond to a couple of things that both the Honourable Member Mr Raphael Trotman from the Alliance For Change and Mr Williams from the PNCR-1G said.

The issue of House-to-House Registration for the last General Elections, I do not know that this side of the House promised House-to-House registration. I do not know that there was a promise that we would have House-to-House registration and whoever claimed that that promise was made, I think they ought to produce the facts that such a promise was made.

Mr Speaker, the other issue which was raised by Mr Trotman, was this whole issue of ID card. In the 2001 Elections, in the 1997 Elections, the voter ID card was the issue, not the National ID card and he being a lawyer ought to know what the Honourable Judge said. The voter ID card should not have been the sole means of identifying the voter. So Mr Speaker, we come back to what a National ID card ought to do; and part

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of that National ID card has to be the policy that Government has with respect to registering citizens, especially those citizens who are of a mature age. And how do we link that number to all the other databases that we are going to have on that citizen? The issue is:

- Do we have a National ID card that will serve only for elections?
- Do we have an ID card that will only be used to identify the citizens when they go to the bank?
- Are we going to use the Tax Identification Number as another number?
- How are we going to merge that with the citizens National ID?
- What about the NIS?

So, Guyana, if we want to move into the information technology age; if we want to digitise information, we are going to have to have a comprehensive number to identify our citizens. What we are saying on this side, the jury is still out and there is an issue committing billions of dollars of taxpayers' money to produce an ID card solely for voting purposes. There is going to be an issue. And then, what is wrong with the current ID card that we have?

The Honourable Member Mr Trotman raised one issue. In fact, he should be advising that person, how she committed a fraud, by knowingly registering under many names. That is what he should be advising her. On the issue of our National

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ID card and fraud, one thing we can say, since we have produced an acceptable election result in 1992, the issue of registering voters has been totally outside of the hands of the Government. It has been in the hands of the Elections Commission.

In 2000, Act 15 of 2000, that is when we gave the Elections Commission the power to make regulations governing all aspects of the Act, so that; in the event that there are issues, the Elections Commission do not have to run to Parliament to get the laws change.

What the Opposition objects to now; is the Government saying that the Elections Commission *may* consult with the Minister of Legal Affairs ... [*Interruption: 'Not may; shall.'*] and that consultation is necessary. The Attorney General is the chief legal mind for the country. Who else? And Elections Commission is still an organ of the State, not an organ of the Government of the day, but an organ of the State. As far as I know, the job of the Attorney General is to advise the State.

Mr Speaker, I do not see why we need to make the proverbial mountain out of this small issue; I do not see why we need to do that. Personally, I do not even see the need for House-to-House Registration. When is this going to stop? All that the House-to-House Registration will do, it will eliminate persons, Guyanese, who may be temporarily out of the country, so when they go to register those persons, not at an address, they will be eliminated. Those persons will have to come back, prove they went ... [*Interruption: 'I heard that you promised to bring many Brazilians.'*] ...Many Brazilians are now eligible for citizenship and registration. Those persons will

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have to come back and go to one of the continuous registration centre and re-apply. Ten years down the road, we are going to have the same issue. We are going to have a number of persons, who have migrated and want to re-migrate and have to go through this entire exercise all over again. The only way you are going to get those persons off the list ... [*Interruption: 'Continuous registration!'*] ... continuous registration would not accomplish that - is if you have periodic House-to-House Registration ... that period may be ten or fifteen years. The position is, for continuous registration, we need agreement on how persons can be removed from the database; not necessarily House-to-House Registration, every single time there are elections.

So, Mr Speaker, I predict that we are going to fall in this loop once again. We are going to fall in this loop whenever somebody is dissatisfied with the results produced in a free and fair election, they will find the blame somewhere and the clean Voters' List is one issue, but every election having a House-to-House Registration would not solve that. That is why, in order to ensure the sanctity of the vote (one person one vote), you have a number of checks and balances in the system; the indelible ink on the finger, a person's I.D. card on the list at the polling places. What we can be assured of, since the changes in 1992, to ensure that the vote that was cast into the box for that particular party, was counted for that party, since then, we have not rolled back any of those provisions to ensure we have free and fair transparent elections in Guyana. That we can bet on. Every amendment that has come to this House since then, has added toward this transparency for proper voting, to ensure that Election results are acceptable.

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Anyone can stand up at any time and shout they have been cheated, anyone, and they can find the flimsiest of excuse, but what we can be assured of from this side of the House is that since the Elections of 1992 and including the 1994 Local Government Election, we have had Elections unprecedented in terms of good governance, in terms of acceptable results and in terms of installing a Government of the people by the people.

So, Mr Speaker, on behalf of my Party and myself, we have no problem with going ahead with this Legislation, in spite of the fact, we do not see the necessity for House-to-House Registration. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Corbin

Before you proceed, Mr Corbin, I would like to remind Members, we have our own ID cards; I hope all of you would have had it; it is of the highest integrity; you can put that in the bank. Thank you.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Mr Speaker, I am a recipient of one; I just received it as I took my seat. I have to check to see whether it can be duplicated.

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Mr Speaker, the debate this afternoon, ought to have been one without controversy and one which should automatically receive the support of this Honourable House. I want to suggest to my colleagues on the other side, that with a few minor amendments to it, that that can be achieved, if only because of our historical experience with interpretation of legislation. But, Mr Speaker, I want to say that I do apologise for not being here and to hear what the Honourable Member reported to the House, but listening to the Honourable Member, Mr Trotman, he seemed to have suggested that there was some statement made and I stand subject to correction, that there was some meeting and discussion over this legislation with the President and myself. I do not know that any such discussion took place, so I just wanted to correct the Honourable Member Mr Trotman. Even if such a statement was made, I cannot speak for any clarity as to what the Honourable Minister did say; he can speak when his time comes, but I can clarify: there was no such discussion with the President, but it seems that my Honourable Member and friend, seems to have a problem with my speaking with the President, but I am duly the elected Leader of the Opposition and I have a right to speak to the President [*Applause*] I have tried in all of those conversations, which I never held behind closed doors to the extent that there are no notes, that there are careful notes, according to the Constitution and Minutes kept, when the Leader of the Opposition and the President meet; it is a requirement of the Constitution and there are adequate notes and Minutes and I always have a note-taker. So, I am not worried about wild statements being made about deals being made behind closed door. I have a duty to represent the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana and the

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Opposition, if they would have me so do, and I would do so to the best of my ability. I am sorry if comrades have problems with that. When perhaps they become Leader of the Opposition, they may have a different approach.

Now Mr Speaker, the President and I did have conversation on the question of the need to have House-to-House Registration, because it is not unknown that a major concern of the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana, prior to the last elections, and I daresay the concern of many Guyanese, not necessarily followers of the PPP/C, was the fact that, there was a new register being created to permit what would have been a continuous registration system and that that new continuous registration system would eliminate the need for any future registration. And, we were concerned that if such an exercise was to be embarked upon, then the foundation upon which that new continuous registration system was based, was one that was flawless and without controversy. And, it is for that reason that we advance, that one should not just accept the final Voters' List of 2001, as the database, but that that database, the final Voter List, should be verified and that was a compromised position in the absence of continuous registration. If that was done, then one would have come to the conclusion that the database from which you were starting to build a new register would have been one that had met with satisfaction, of all the participants to the electoral process.

The Elections Commission then has shown all parties in Guyana, including Mr Nadir that they were going to do this registration; there were several proposals, including a seven-step method, to carry out this verification of that base, to remove all future controversies from that List. Eventually, for

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various reasons with which I do not want to burden the House, because I think it is well-known, it was well ventilated prior to the last Elections and after for various reasons, that process was never done to the extent that there were questions as to whether there should be participation in that Election, because of that serious flaw. So, we went into the 2001 Elections, out of a recognition that the data upon which we started the electoral register was not properly verified and did not remove the doubts, which the political Parties, not only the PNCR, had with the Voters' List. And so, it was my duty to continually raise this matter with the President that we could not think of Local Government Elections unless we rectify this serious flaw which existed and it is in that context that we agreed that we should seek to have an electoral list that would remove future controversy. I think it would be helpful for the country. It would remove an important area of controversy and allow all the participants to the electoral process, not only the PNCR-1G, but all parties from dealing with issues that sometimes deflect from objective campaign, and it is in that context that the agreement that I arrived at with the President, was one that we will seek to satisfy House-to-House Registration.

This legislation is seeking to give reality to that, because it did not only become a decision of the President and the Leader of the Opposition, because in that conversation, quite unlike the representations being made by my colleague on this side of the House, I suggested that since this is a matter that involves all political parties that everyone should be involved in the discussion. And, I recall that all political parties in this Parliament were signatories to that Agreement and obviously if there was some concern about the outcome of the discussion

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or there was some dissatisfaction about what was agreed, there was ample opportunity before the signature was put on the document for objections to be made. The fact that the signatures were put on that document so quickly, I think gave testimony to the effectiveness of the representation and the acceptability of representation of the Leader of the Opposition and the President. *[Applause]*

So let us not waste time with frivolous matters in this Parliament. The issue is whether the legislation before this House can achieve the objectives which we seek to achieve and it is my contention that it does generally seek to do that with just one exception or should I say two exceptions. One really had to do with the point made by my colleague Mr Basil Williams, which I would like to emphasize and that is, while it is understood that the basis of the registration must be from the original of the actual field work, the way that the legislation is drafted, could be subjected to misinterpretation, and one needs to make sure there is no room for misunderstanding.

If you look at Clause 3 (i) of the Bill which seeks to amend Section (9) of the Principal Act, it says very clearly that -

The Commissioner shall establish a central register which shall consist of a computerised database.

Now, there is no problem with that, because in a previous legislation - a previous amendment - we made provision for including in the legislation the use of computers and so on, but if you read on, it says:

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... consists of a computerised database and the original of the registration records of all persons registered.

What my colleague was suggesting that that computerised database should be made up of the records from the originals of the registration records. In other words, you are making, as the late Leader Mr Hoyte, would say *assurances doubly sure*. It does not change its substance what is there; it is saying that there should be no room for misinterpretation as to the source of the computerised database, because what it is saying:

You should establish a central register which shall consist of a computerised database and the original of the registration records of all persons.

So it suggests or could be interpreted by any mischievous person and Mr Speaker, you know, when you make a legislation, you do not make legislation for the incumbent, you make legislation for all times and therefore, you have to ensure there is no future misinterpretation of this, that the computer database must not be written in a way that it suggests that it could be different from the original records.

What I understand the Legislation to be saying, you will make a computer database from the original of the records and you will also keep as a record, the original record. So, in case there is a query on the computer, you can always cross-reference that with the hard copies, which are the original records. That is what I understand the Legislation to be saying and I think that is what is intended and I do not think there

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should be any controversy over that. So, what we are saying is, amend it in such a way, so that no-one in future interprets that you could create some computer database that has no bearing on the original records. That is all I am saying and I do not think it is beyond the ingenuity of the Parliamentary Counsel and those hoping to be Parliamentary Counsels to come up with a form of words that can... So, I would suggest, that it can be amended simply to mean, the original of the registration records from information on the originals of registration records and also the other things. I do not know if I am making myself clear; I am saying that it will remove any doubts. [*Interruption: 'No system is a perfect system.'*] I know it cannot be a perfect system, but my grandmother told me, *if you see things in the day, do not wait till night to tek fire-stick to look for dem.* That is what my grandmother told me. And I am saying if we see something in the day, as we are about to pass this Legislation; it is a sentence. I know that is what is intended; I do not think of any skulduggery plan. I am just suggesting that we look at it.

The second observation and I hope it is accepted. It is not difficult to put it in. The second point I would like to make on this Legislation, Mr Speaker, is the part of this Legislation which speaks about *after consultation with the Minister*. I think that the whole of Clause 4 should be deleted and I hope my friends will agree with me that the entire Clause 4 is a duplication of the existing Legislation. I will tell you why, unless I am advised that this has been repealed - Act No. 15/2000 - if you look at Section 22 and I will read Section 22. I can be advised if this has been repealed. Section 22 speaks about removal of difficulties - Section 22 of the Election Laws

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(Amendment) Act and I am quoting here from Section 22(1) which says:

If any difficulty arises in connection with the application of this Act, the Representation of the People's Act or the National Registration Act, or any relevant subsidiary Legislation, the Commission shall...

not may

...shall by order make any provision including the amendment of the said Legislation that appears to the Commission to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty and any such Order may modify any of the said Legislation in respect of any particular matter or occasion so far as it may appear to the Commission to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty.

Now, I remember when this Legislation was passed your Honour, specifically to empower the Elections Commission, which was embarking on a new system to enable them to carry out their mandate without difficulty. Now, unless I am advised that this has been repealed, then Clause 4 is not necessary, because what Clause 4 seeks to do, is to introduce an abridged form of what already exists in Section 22 of Act No. 15 of 2000. So, I need to be advised, and if indeed, I am advised that Act No.15 of 2000, Section 22 (1) has been repealed, then it is my humble suggestion that all we need to do is to eliminate what is at Clause 4 of this Bill and include

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what was there originally in Section 22 (1) of the Act No 15 of 2000 and there will be no need for all this controversy. You see, Clause 4 of the present Bill we are debating, introduces a new concept that could again create some problems. What is says here is that *the Commission may by Order* but now *after consultation with the Minister*. Now, I think that creates an unhealthy situation, because the Commission can, without this Act consult with the Minister, they can consult as they have been doing, with the President. We hear of the Meetings with the Elections Commission Chairman and the President *ad nauseam*. This is the point I am making, so you do not have to put it in. Thank you for agreeing with me. Without it being there, there is nothing to prevent the Elections Commission as a Constitutional Body meeting with anyone, either with the President as they have done; they have met with me; they have met with other Parliamentary Opposition Parties. We have requested ... you do not have to put it in the law that they will consult; they ought to consult. But when you put it now in Legislation, it seems to give a new kind of interpretation, which is prone to controversy, because you do not have to have it in the Legislation. If indeed, as you are agreeing with me, that you do not intend to fetter the discretion of the Elections Commission. The whole purpose of this is just to empower the Elections Commission, to consult with the Minister. I am saying that you do not need Legislation to do so. The only reason you should object to this is if indeed, there is some intention to fetter the discretion of the Elections Commission.

Mr Speaker, I would suggest that one of the three approaches I have recommended be adopted. One is to be deleted

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completely; because it is already taken care of, it is already there, they already have the power to make by Order, anything they need to do. If this has been repealed and I would like to get some legal advice before we pass it. If it has been repealed, then I am suggesting that you delete Clause 4 and incorporate what was originally written in the Legislation of Act No.15 of 2000 and that would take care of this in a very simple manner.

Now, I come to some matters which are not really in the Bill, but have been raised in the Debate and that is about the ID card. But, I would like to inform Mr Ramotar and Mr Nadir that our emphasis on Identification Card, is born out of experience and also out of the Law, which we are passing, because the original Legislation (perhaps I should pause a bit to explain). There is some debate that the issue of Identification Cards is separate and completely different from National Registration. I would like to debunk that immediately and to say that the process of National Registration, as a result of the National Registration Act, is a process which was designed to identify citizens of Guyana through a National Registration exercise.

One of the purposes of the ID card is Election so to that extent, I agree with Mr Nadir that the purpose of National Registration is to adequately identify your citizens and that is why from the inception of the National Registration Act, in the 1960s, I think it was 1964. I cannot remember when that amendment was made, significant amendment to the National Registration Act, it provided for registration of persons from age fourteen years, so that it was clear that the purpose of registration could not only be for Elections, but persons who were about to come of age would be able to identify

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themselves as citizens of Guyana and that card was the basis by which they would be identified.

I remember that first red card, those of us who have few years, the red card with your photograph, the photograph looked a lot better than the most recent card that brought in electronics and all kinds of things. At least your photograph looked more like you in the older system. And, having computerised the system, we had difficulty with all the modern technology of reproducing photographs looking like the persons whom they have taken out.

The point is from inception National ID cards were part of the registration process; it was not separate and distinct. So, you produce an ID card after your registration and that ID card is supposed to be synchronised to the registration data, so that ID cards give a reflection that this is emanating from the new process. Therefore, if you are going to have a new registration, it follows ... It is not a matter to debate; it follows that if you do new registration and you have to produce new National ID cards. Now that should not be confused by the aberration that Mr Ramotar speaks about Voter' ID card. That was a unique introduction, because of some peculiar circumstances at the time, and I do not think we are talking here about Voter ID card; we are speaking about National Identification card for our citizens.

I ask the question now, if the linking this ID card with the database or using that information to find out the TIN number and all of that, those are administrative matters and I do not believe that these matters are beyond the contemplation or the ingenuity of the technical people. In fact, I do remember on to

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now, although it has been changed, my National Insurance card number is identical to my first National ID card - 425475- it is stuck in my head. Because when the first set of ID cards was done, the red and white cards, the National Registration took note of those cards and included it in their database. So of course, at the end of that they will have a stroke and they will have the additional numbers to it.

So, the whole question of using National ID card as reference points for other institutions is not something that any reasonable person would object to. I would think that it is a desirable objective and it would help with the whole administration of database; perhaps it would help even in some of duplication which Mr Ramotar seems not to know about. But the point I am making is that to suggest that you are going to abandon, postpone or de-link National Identification cards production from the new registration exercise, would be to venture into an area which is going to create the same controversy that caused us to reject the last verification exercise.

When we can have suggestions that you can use the old ID card with this new database, don't you see Mr Speaker, we are creating problems for ourselves? We wasted millions of dollars on the last registration exercise, which if a similar advice was taken by Elections Commission and others, this exercise today would have been unnecessary. But we wasted money on a so-called verification of part of the List, which required people to visit homes three times, the very homes they could have used to verify the persons who lived there and at the end of wasting the very taxpayers' money that the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar was concerned about a few

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moments ago, we are still again talking about expenditure of taxpayers' money to remove controversy.

I am suggesting, humbly Mr Speaker, that to attempt to intermix the old National ID card, reproduced from a questionable database, to link them with this new House-to-House registration, is flawed with serious controversy and danger.

For the benefit of the Honourable Member Mr Ramotar, I would like to again read what Chapter 19:08 states and that is why I want to debunk this thought. I am speaking about the whole registration process and I am reading from Section 12 of the National Registration Act 19:08 and I am not aware this has been deleted:

The Commissioner shall in accordance with Regulations based for the purpose, prepare Identification Cards for, and cause them to be issued, in such manner as he thinks fit, to persons registered under this Act.

So the question of ID cards being separate is an integral part of the registration process that Section 12 of the original Act speaks to and the only reason why we have had cause to make a fuss about this, Mr Speaker, is because we have heard these strange theories coming up -

- that the Guyana Revenue Authority is producing some new card;
- that there is some plan by the Government to have a general ID card;

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- that they may not be the reproduction of a new National ID card after this registration.

So, rather than wait until the issue becomes one that creates conflict, we are suggesting very early that whatever needs to be done to tidy up our system to ensure that we have a National ID card as required by the Act. It is not optional, so you can decide that you are not producing a card. In fact, the Chairman of the Elections Commission has told me that he is aware of this Act; that he is aware of his responsibility, so I am a little confused, when there are suggestions being made in some quarters that there seems to be some option available to either the Elections Commission or the Government, to delay in the production of National ID cards.

I trust that this does not become a matter of controversy, but that whatever has to be done, if the Honourable Member, Mr Nadir wants tax information on it, that is for the IT experts; it is not rocket science; this is a modern age. The Americans have Social Security cards; they just punch that number in the computer and you can get a lot of information. Brazil, with millions of people, they have an ID card for their citizens.

So, what I am saying is, all that you are asking to do is not impossible, but to say that you are going to sacrifice the observance of the law, which requires you to produce ID cards after registration, is a completely different issue, which is going to be fraught with controversy. So, if Mr Sattaur wants a number to source, let his technical people speak to the Elections Commission. What we do not want is the Elections Commission sending information down there. He must contact the Elections Commission and the technical people at

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the Elections Commission must know what they are doing, because they are the persons responsible for the production of the ID card. Whatever features you want to put in to link, they must send their record and the Elections Commission's technical people can easily add it on. But I trust that that does not form the bone of contention.

Mr Speaker, I think I have tried as simple as possible - to put it in simple language - so that there can be no unnecessary controversy. What I said is very clear; we agree with the Legislation, but we believe that some minor changes would avoid misinterpretation and in what particular case it is unnecessary. Once that is agreed, we can proceed to have continuous House-to-House registration with the support of all the parties in Guyana. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Health

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, I have forgotten in my original presentation to mention the fact that the Prime Minister is not only on leave, but is celebrating his birthday today and Mr Trotman, who reminded us of what a great day this is, it is his birthday and the Prime Minister's anniversary, so I think we are all going to, later on, have a toast to the birthdays and the anniversary. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: I believe Mr Corbin will be joining in that.

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Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Yes, Mr Speaker, I suspected that Mr Corbin was timing it, because of his long presentation. The debate on this Bill has gone far, far too long. It is something we agreed on.

Mr Speaker, Mr Corbin, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, was quite correct, because when I made my original Presentation, I talked about a meeting on 13 June. We had a discussion and Agreement around House-to-House Registration, not the Legislation which came later and in fact, Mr Corbin referred to the 14th. A lot of people - different people - from the political parties, the Commission and so, got together and signed that Agreement. That is what I was referring to, not the Legislation; that only came recently and that is why it is being presented now.

Mr Speaker, right at the beginning, I want to say to Mr Corbin that we would not have any objection to the Amendment being suggested to Clause 3, but I remain unpersuaded in terms of Clause 4 and I do not see any jeopardy in the Commission having decided to issue or order consulting with the Minister. In fact we have selected Act No. 15 of 2000 and refer to the provision of making an Order and that that should apply to this particular Act. In fact, that provision is for a separate Act and this one here that we are providing for is applicable to this Act, and I have been advised on that matter. Also, both the Honourable Member Mr Williams and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, referred to that provision, but when I was talking about standard legislative language, I was not only referring to Act No.15 of 2000, but several others and in fact, in the others, the language is even stronger, because there, is the Minister that makes the Order, not the Commission.

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This time around, it is the Commission making the Order and consulting and we do not see any jeopardy. Mr Speaker, I can join the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Mr Trotman - the birthday Mr Trotman - and Mr Williams in a discussion on ID card, but this Amendment is not about ID card. I suspect that, in fact, after House-to-House Registration has begun, we will have quite a robust debate over ID cards. There are different views on this. As we are saddened by the death of Mrs Bhutto today; in a democracy there should be robust debate; that is what we are exercising and I agree with Mr Trotman, that indeed, as we come to the end of 2007, we have reasons to celebrate our democracy, because we do have differences of views and we do have robust debate. At the beginning of the debate on House-to-House Registration, we were on different sides, we had different views, but after a robust debate, we now have agreement that we are proceeding with House-to-House Registration. I suspect the same things will happen with ID cards. So, not to delay the evitable here, and passing something that we all agree, and in moving on the House-to-House Registration, which we now all agree with, I would suggest, Mr Speaker, that we pass this Amendment Bill at its Second reading and at the appropriate time, we will consider and support the Amendment in Clause 3. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

Question put and agreed to.

IN COMMITTEE

Clause 1

Question proposed, put and agreed to

Clause 1, as printed, stands part of the Bill

Clause 2

Question proposed, put and agreed to

Clause 2, as printed, stands part of the Bill.

Clause 3

Question proposed

The Chairman: Yes, Mr Corbin ...

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Mr Robert HO Corbin: I am suggesting, Mr Chairman, that after the words *computerised database*, we have the following words included, *of the information from the originals of the registration records*. So, it is *the computerised database of the information from the originals of the registration records and the originals of the registration records*.

So, you will still have *and the originals* again, because there are two sets of records.

I thank you

The Speaker: Honourable Members, a seconder, please ...

Mr Basil Williams: I second the amendment.

Amendment -

After the words *computerised database* insert the words *of the information from the originals of the registrations records*.

Amendment proposed, put and agreed to

Amendment carried.

Clause 3 as amended

Put and agreed to.

Clause 3 as amended stands part of the Bill.

Clause 4

Question proposed

.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Mr Chairman, I want to again strongly recommend that this is a duplication or the introduction of conflicting legislation and suggest that this Clause be deleted.

Amendment -

That Clause 4 be deleted

Mr Basil Williams: I second the amendment

Proposed, put and negatived.

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Put and agreed to.

Clause 4, as printed, stands part of the Bill.

Assembly Resumed

**Bill reported with an amendment; as amended; considered,
read the Third time and passed as amended.**

The Speaker: Thank you very much Honourable Members.

We can now proceed to the next item on the Order Paper.

**ITEM 2 - VALUATION OF PROPERTY FOR RATING
PURPOSES (VALIDATION) BILL - Bill No. 29/2007
published on 2007-12-05**

*A BILL intituled, an Act to declare
and validate the valuation of
property in the City of Georgetown
for rating purposed*

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The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

Hon Kellawan Lall: Mr Speaker, I rise to move the Second reading of the following Bill, Valuation of Property For Rating Purposes (Validation) Bill - Bill No. 29/2007.

In doing so, I wish to explain to this Honourable House that between 1995 and 1996, the Chief Valuation Officer, in accordance with the provision of the Valuation for Rating Purposes Act, Chapter 28:04 prepared a Draft Valuation List and faulted in accordance with the requisite Ministerial Order. In September 1996, this Draft Valuation List was handed over to the Georgetown Municipality. The Georgetown Municipality on 5 October 1996, published the List - gave public notice of the List - for purposes of people making objections and comments and all of that. I was made to understand this was done and eventually a final List was prepared by the Chief Valuation Officer and submitted to the City Council. The City Council went ahead and put into effect that new Valuation from 1 January 2007.

However, recently I have been advised by the Town Clerk, Ms Beulah Williams that she had made strenuous efforts to procure some documents to prove that the entire legal process of that valuation process had gone through and had been taken care of. The research, so far, found that there are some mistakes and the legal process was not completed, so that has put the City Council in a very awkward position that in the

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event of any litigation, they cannot verify that in fact, this List was validated by Law.

So, the purpose of this Bill is to put into effect that Valuation List, which came into effect on 1 January 1997 and of course, that respective effect.

I wish to say that, I intend to move two amendments, which basically would be the same thing, that in Clause 1, instead of *thirtieth day of September 1996* that should read *the first day of January 1997* and also the same amendment in Clause 3.

Basically, Mr Speaker, a mistake has been made and we are here in Parliament now, as Parliament to validate this exercise, this Valuation List, retrospectively.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mrs Clarissa Riehl

Mrs Clarissa S Riehl: Mr Speaker, the Honourable Minister said that a mistake has been made, in the spirit of not getting into who made the mistake. Because my information is that the second Order after following on to what the Honourable Minister said, a Draft List was prepared, by Order, according to Section 4(1) of the Act, but a subsequent Order after that Draft List was subject to objections, those objections were sent to the Valuation Officer and a subsequent Order, on a date on which the List shall come into operation, that is the document, apparently which cannot be found, but the Draft

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List in fact, had become the List, with which the City Council has been operating.

Mr Speaker, I do not want to speak very long on this matter because there is not much to speak as the Honourable Minister said, but what is very, very important is that... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: But how can that be so? I have a list of seven speakers. The Minister spoke for four minutes; you are declaring your intention not to be long, but I have a list of seven Speakers. Anyway, proceed, Mrs Riehl

Mrs Clarissa S Riehl: Yes Mr Speaker. Section 11 of this Act - the Valuation of Property for Rating Purposes, deals with the objections, which people can make within twenty-one days of that Draft List.

Then, Section 15 deals with proposals after the List had been in operation for two years, people can come or persons or any person can come and make proposals, which is another page of objections, as it were. But, the final stage, which the citizens of this city have not been able to accede to, is the stage of appeal, because Sir, and this is the area in which I would like to ask the Honourable Minister to get about establishing the Appeal Panel.

First of all, the Minister must, by Order, bring about Panels, for appeals purposes and these Panels would constitute themselves with the Committee.

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My understanding is that the City Council was asked for a name to be put on the Panel in Georgetown City Council and the name of Mr Llewellyn John was given and that name was roundly rejected by not this Minister, but by his predecessor. Since that time, which was a number of years ago, no Panel for the City Council, no Committee of Appeal for the City Council, has been constituted and this was pre-1996 and pre-1997, which the Honourable Minister speaks of. But that is the Body - this Appeals Body - the Committee. First of all, the Panel then becomes a Committee, is the ultimate sort of Appeal, where citizens can get redress against any rating, any valuation which she is displeased; And I understand, there is a number of people in the city, who are aggrieved by ratings that City Council is putting on their properties. For instance, on empty land where there is no building and where the City Council have nothing to do on the land, because they do not clean it, the owner still has the ultimate duty to clean and weed the empty land. The City Council had decided to put on a rate of 400 percent just arbitrarily like that and there is no recourse or appeal.

So my plea this afternoon to the Honourable Minister, who now holds the portfolio, to try and get those Committees in place, because the appeals from those Committees, Sir, go also to a judge in Chamber and finally to the Court of Appeal, which shows how important the Act is to redress citizens' grievances in this area.

We would want to support this Bill, Sir, because we do not want the City Council to be put in jeopardy. They have been implementing these things since 1997, even though it is a Draft Bill, and even thought... there is a Section here Sir, 4(6) which

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says that the period may be extended to ten years, even on the Draft Order that it cannot go beyond ten years. So, even on 1 January 1997, as the Honourable Minister says, we are now in December, 1997 so there is no recourse here. We have to come to the Parliament, because there is no Order to extend it beyond ten years.

So, my appeal this afternoon really is to have the Appeal Committee set up so that citizens can have redress in the area of unreasonable rates and taxes on their properties in the city. That is all I would like to say, Sir, and we would give our support in the interest of the law and good governance, the City Council and the Government. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member

Honourable Member, Mr Patterson.

My complaints about the list of speakers elicited some positive response.

Mr David Patterson: Mr Speaker, I rise to present the AFC's position, on Bill No 29 of 2007. This Bill, as the Minister pointed out, seeks to validate the Draft Valuation List of the City of Georgetown, eleven years after it was issued and eleven years after the citizens of Georgetown, have been duly paying their taxes, on the basis of this List.

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Mr Speaker, the first question that arises is, why it has taken the City Council eleven years to recognise that due legal process was not followed. The List was handed over in September 1996 and the effective date was January 1997. Under the Valuation for Rates and Purposes Act, the Minister is required to publish notice of this List in the Official Gazette for it to come into force. However, as we now hear it was not done and eleven years later, the Minister is seeking our approval in this Parliament to validate the List, which the City Council had been using for ten years. Of course, I understand the reason behind the validation now, is to avoid any further litigation. The Minister fails to mention that there has been litigation on this matter that is how it came to light of the City Council in the first place.

Persons have refused to pay their rates and taxes on the basis that this List is not legal and that the rate that they should be paying should be based on 1996 Valuation List. By us validating this List, it now empowers the City Council to recoup and to sort out that challenge.

However, validating this List eleven years after it has been prepared, holds its additional challenges by even continuing to use the 1996 List, will further contribute to financial woes of the City Council. This will happen for the simple reason that any new building, erection or extension, done in the city of Georgetown since 1996, is not covered in this Valuation Bill that we are now validating.

Mr Speaker, all the new World Cup hotels, apartment buildings, are not captured under this List. All the massive new homes you see going up, all the houses in Sophia, all the

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pool halls and night clubs on Sheriff Street, are not covered under this List. All the refurbished political Offices are not covered under this List. Mr Speaker, any building that is being extended or improved since 1996, is not covered under this List. What are covered is the pre-1996 values; that is what is in the List. Under that List, you can still rent a building in Georgetown for \$2,000 and that is the basis on which the City Council calculates the fees due.

Mr Speaker, at the rate of 250 percent of those values for commercial properties and 40 percent of those values for the residential buildings, that lack of not having all these new buildings covered translate to millions of dollars loss for the City Council.

This issue is something that the City Council has been raising for a number of years without much success. But of course, a financially independent City Council has not been this Administration's highest priority ever; you cannot control an organisation that is financially independent; you cannot control an organisation that does not have to keep coming to you and begging every time they are cash trapped. Mr Speaker, we can say all we want about the effectiveness of the current Georgetown City Council, however, if the administration does not give them all the tools to effectively operate, they are responsible for their poor service. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, this is not relative to the city of Georgetown alone. The Valuation Lists in New Amsterdam, Corriverton, Linden, Rosehall and Anna Regina were completed between November 1975 and December 1976. All of these

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municipalities have been severely hampered in their effort to collect their revenues.

However, all cities are equal, but some cities are more equal than others. Some of these Towns receive adequate subventions to ensure that they can operate. Georgetown City Council is not one of those.

Mr Speaker, the Government signed an Urban Rehabilitation Development Programme with one of the main purpose to improve the effectiveness of our town. It had two components:

- The structural component; and
- An upgrading of the revenue collection for the municipalities.

Of course, much was made of the improved infrastructural works by the ruling Party during Elections. Full credit was taken for the roads, upgrading of markets, et cetera, yet to date, the frolic has ended and the Government is yet to implement any of the revenue collection processes and measures.

Mr Speaker, new Valuation Lists have been completed for Anna Regina, Corriverton, Rosehall and New Amsterdam and handed over to the Government. These new Valuation Lists reflect the current prices - current values of the properties - yet these Lists sit on some desk in the Ministry of Finance. A new List for Georgetown is six percent complete; it can be completed within the second quarter of next year. That list will capture all the new erections since 1996. The list for Lethem is completed; yet the Government refuses to accept

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these Lists on the basis that the values of the properties contained in these Lists are too high. All you have to do, simple maths, instead of charging 250 percent for commercial properties, reduce that percentage to five percent or ten percent if the market values are high. In that way, you will capture all the buildings, all the properties in Georgetown and in all the other Towns. *[Applause]* By doing that you will get the result of persons paying less taxes, but, of course, a wider tax net more revenue for the City Council. For some reason, as stated before, the Government has refused to implement the new Valuation Lists.

Mr Speaker, finally, I would just like to say some words on the Department that is tasked with preparing this Valuation List, which is responsible for billions of dollars of revenue not taken into account from all our NDCs. This Department is in a sad state; this Department does not even own or has access to a vehicle. The vehicle they had, is now back with the Ministry of Finance for the Ministry's use. How can you expect the Valuation Department to go and update this List; when they do not have any means of transportation? Mr Speaker, they are currently operating with sixty percent staffing level.

The equipment under the Urban Development Programme that were purchased for the Valuation Department - the computers, the printers, the desks - and I see the Honourable Minister of Finance sitting here and he can check them out. They have never been handed over to the Valuation Department so they can effectively do their jobs.

Mr Speaker, a Chief Valuation Officer is yet to be appointed for the simple reason that the Government refuses to pay a

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competitive salary. That is the simple reason. There were negotiations with numerous individuals - qualified persons - but they refused to pay a competitive salary. They are willing to pay a competitive salary to certain organisations that have questionable success rates. I am talking about the investors and those things, yet they refuse to hire a competent person, who will be responsible for billions of dollars of revenue. Penny wise ... *[Interruption: 'Pound foolish!']*

Mr Speaker, while we understand the dilemma that the Government is in. We, by not approving this Bill will make the city council liable for money that they cannot repay. We would like to give our approval to the proviso that the Minister undertakes to implement the Valuation List that is currently sitting in the Ministry of Finance within the first half of 2008, so that the taxpayers in Georgetown would have no need for this burden. At the City Council, the Minister at the last sitting, offered the Opposition Party to come and sit down to talk about the future of the City Council, to ensure that we can have those discussions that the City Council has the adequate revenues. We are hoping that he implements all the Valuation Lists that he has in his possession, so that the revenues can be collected. With those words, Mr Speaker, I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member Mr Bernard DeSantos

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SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 10 (1)**

Members, before you start, Mr DeSantos, would any Member be willing to move that we continue until we finish? It is now four o'clock.

Hon. Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, I would like to move that we continue until the debate on this Bill...

The Speaker: ... until our Business is finished.

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Yes.

The Speaker: Thank you, very much.

Put and agreed to

Motion carried.

Mr DeSantos

Mr Bernard C DeSantos: Mr Speaker, when I was asked to speak to this Bill, I immediately shared the concerns which you have expressed and I am grateful to my colleague Mr Murray, who saw it fit, not to have added his two pounds on an already over-weighted subject. But I am afraid that I will have to say something in particular for people to understand what is in fact a very simple matter, but you know, these sittings are

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televised and people ought to be able to follow what we are doing in the House. People ought not to sit in front of their television sets and listen to a lot of language and verbiage and at the end they say, *but what it is they are talking about?* It is for this reason that I think, I am going to give a little explanation of why it has become necessary to pass this Legislation. Perhaps, the proper place to start is to explain what the valuation is all about.

The City Council has to raise rates and taxes and it does so under the Provisions of the Law, expressed in the Valuation Act of Chapter 28:04. In doing so, there is, as my colleague on the other side, the Honourable Member Mrs Riehl explained, there is a process. I have been trying to find out what was the direct reason which caused the operation to become flawed, but it seems to me, that the only proper reason that I have heard is that the proper document cannot be located and therefore, *ex abundante*, it is necessary to pass this Law to give effect and validate what may have appeared or what was in fact incorrectly done some time ago.

Mr Speaker, the City Council performs certain services and because those services are rendered mostly to house owners, they must pay for those services and they pay through the system of collection of rates and taxes based on the valuation of their property.

I find Mr Patterson's submission untenable ... if he wants to get at people with hotels and night clubs on Sheriff Street and otherwise, he should do it elsewhere. The fact is that Valuation List valid or not, we created those laws, and all that has to be done, is that the Valuation List is amended from time to time.

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So, what he said there is really a non sector. Whether this List was good, bad or indifferent, we should amend them; he should be courageous. You cannot get sued for slandering. He should come out and perform here, so that, when he goes outside they will know who is who. He must not be fearful. The fact is that, those people will have a valuation done and they will have to be put on the list; they will have to be put on the register as property owners in their respective areas.

The next thing that I take issue with him is, calling on the Government to implement some List, he said is sixty percent ready. If he has read this Bill, he should see an indication. This List is only going to be in force until the next list comes along. I would expect that if the List is ready, and it meets with the approval of both the Government and City Council, it will be put into effect. A list is not something that is done every year. A list is prepared and as you know, Mr Speaker, property values fluctuate, but more often rise and it is not every year, because a couple of thousands of dollars is added, you go and make a new list. It is not like that. It happens over a period of time, when it is felt that the services which are provided, require that the List be made current, so as to be reflective of the cost of the services which the City Council provides.

When all of this is said and done, we get back to the Bill. I am not going to get outside my mandate and talk about Corriverton and all these things. It shows good knowledge of these things, but it is not relevant to what we are talking here, not relevant. This is a very simple Provision; something went wrong and it is our duty to put it right, so let us do. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

Hon Kellawan Lall: Mr Speaker. I want to thank the Honourable Members, Mrs Riehl and Mr Bernard De Santos for their contributions. I am sure that when the public would have listened to this Debate, they would get from them a better idea of what we are talking about.

First of all, I wish to say that I think in referring to what I am supposed to amend, I mentioned 2007. In fact, for the records, it was 1997 and not 2007. I want to make it very clear that the list with which the City Council had been operating all along, is the final List prepared by the Chief Valuation Officer ... not with that. I just want to make that correction.

The issue of the Appeals Panel ... well Mrs Riehl, we can discuss that on a different occasion; this is definitely not the time for that.

The Honourable Mr Patterson did mention that there are no assessments and valuations being done. Although he is contradicting himself in saying at one time the rates are low and a next time the rates are high let me hasten to say I am not in a hurry to increase rates and taxes all over the country just like that. This is a serious matter and one may complain that rates and taxes are low and these Municipalities are not getting

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enough revenues. On the other hand, we have a lot of people crying out that everything is going up and the Government has to be careful with its social policies in implementing these increases. On the one hand, we are having this criticism of things going up and on the other hand some Members of the Opposition are complaining that we are not increasing rates and taxes. I am not and the Government is not interested in hurrying to implement these new valuations at the moment. The list is only six percent ready and we have to wait until the list is ready, before we could proceed with the whole list. It is quite logical. Mr Patterson knows this, so we are not interested in increasing rates and taxes at the moment. What we are interested in at this particular moment is, it seems that there has been a flaw in the legal process, in validating the 1997 List, with which the City Council is operating, and this is an appeal to the Parliament of Guyana, for us to validate that list and correct that mistake. If it was in fact a mistake, they cannot really find the Order, if an Order was made. So I cannot say if it was the Minister who made the mistake or the City Council who made the mistake in implementing the List without the Order Paper. But, that is not the point at the moment; the point is that, they cannot find the records showing that that List, which was given to the City Council by the Chief Valuation Officer and which the City Council started using in 1997, has not been validated, they cannot prove it. So, this is there; this piece of Legislation is here to correct that situation for the City Council to continue its work as per normal. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker and I now move to have the Bill read for a Second time.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member.

Question put and agreed to

Bill read a Second time.

IN COMMITTEE

The Chairman: Honourable Members, We are in Committee. Are there any amendments, Honourable Members?

Hon Kellawan Lall: Yes

The Chairman: What amendment, Honourable Member?

Hon Kellawan Lall: In Clause 1, instead of *thirtieth day of September, 1996*, that should read *first day of January, 1997*.

And in Clause 3, the third line, the same thing: instead of thirtieth day of September, 1996, that should read the first day of January, 1997.

The Chairman: 1997 or 2007?

Hon Kellawan Lall: 1997.

The Chairman: In both cases?

Hon Kellawan Lall: Yes 1997.

Clause 1

Amendment -

Delete the words *30th day of September 1996*
and insert the words *1st day of January 1997*

Propose, put and agreed to.

Amendment carried.

Clause 1 as amended

Proposed, put and agreed to

**Clause 1, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part
of the Bill**

Clause 2

Question proposed, put and agreed to

**Clause 2, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of
the Bill.**

Clause 3

The Chairman: This amendment is coming from Minister Lall and please let it be so recorded.

Mr Lall has proposed the amendment, that the words and figures *30th day of September, 1996* be deleted and to be substituted therefor the following figures and words *1st day of January, 1997*.

Amendment -

Delete the words *30th day of September, 1996* in line 3 and insert the words *1st day of January, 1997*.

Proposed, put and agreed to

Amendment carried

Clause 3 as amended

Proposed, put and agreed to

Clause 3, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill

Clause 4

Proposed, put and agreed to

Clause 4, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Assembly Resumed

Bill reported with amendments, read the Third time and passed as amended.

(iii) COMMITTEE BUSINESS

MOTION

**ITEM 3 - SECOND PERIODIC REPORT OF THE
PARLIAMENTARY SECTORAL**

COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES

BE IT RESOLVED;

That the Second Periodic Report of the Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services be adopted.

The Speaker: The Honourable Member, Mrs Amna Ally, Chairperson for Parliamentary Sectoral Committee on Social Services, will move a Motion presenting their Report.

The Honourable Member, Mrs Ally.

Miss Amna Ally: Mr Speaker. I note that brevity is the order of the day and I do not propose to deviate from that.

Mr Speaker, this Second Periodic Report covers the period 26 November 2004 to April, 2006. The Report highlights the issues raised, the concerns and suggestions discussed during the Committee's Meetings with Ministers and public Officials and visits made to these areas of concern. The recommendations contained therein, emanate largely from the Committee's examination of the information obtained during these interactions with the Members of the Executive and Staff of the various Ministries and Agencies, which fall under the purview of the Committee. I wish therefore, to ask that this second Periodic Report of the Parliamentary Sectoral

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Committee on Social Services, standing in my name, be adopted.

The Speaker: Thank you very much Honourable Member.

Any Member of the Government's side wishes to speak? Are you reluctant Honourable Member, I can relieve you of that burden.

Hon Dr Bheri S Ramsaran: I want to thank the Committee for a well prepared Report and there is one quick thing I want to remind the Assembly of, which came out of the work of this Committee and its predecessor. It was the emphasis on the de-stigmatisation of HIV/AIDS. This Honourable House did take part, some time back, in a workshop which had been sponsored by one of our international partners. We did take a commitment recently, on the INTERNATIONAL AIDS DAY, when we celebrated that, to recommit and I would like to take this opportunity, of the presentation of the Report, to remind our Members of our commitment with the so-called; Port-of-Spain Protocol and that we should look back at the points there and recommit. The commitment was that, at every opportunity, especially in dealing with our Constituents, we will keep speaking about this. So, I would like to use this good opportunity, of the presentation of this Report, to remind us of that and the commitment that we took recently on the INTERNATIONAL AIDS DAY to continue this work in the de-stigmatisation of HIV/AIDS.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Is there anything further, Mrs Ally? *[Pause]*

Question -

That the Second Period Report of the
Parliamentary

Sectoral Committee on Social Services be
adopted.

Proposed, put and agreed to.

Report Adopted.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Members; that brings us to the end of our Meeting for today.

NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS

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I would like to take this opportunity, once again, to wish Members a very prosperous New Year and I would like to say that I look forward and I invite Members, to look forward to the work of the National Assembly in the year ahead. We will have a very eventful year in that we have some important Select Committee Reports, which I hope will come out during the course of next year, which will conclude the major Reforms that we had embarked on some years ago. I am looking forward to those and I invite Members to take keen interest in these matters and hopefully we will come to a successful conclusion on those during the course of next year.

The Honourable Member Mr Corbin

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Mr Speaker, may I, on behalf of the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana also extend to you and your family, as well as to the Staff of Parliament and Members of the Government and Members of the other Parliamentary Party in this Parliament, sincere wishes for a very successful and productive year, 2008. I am conscious of the fact that 2007 presented Guyana and decision-makers in this House with severe challenges and I am hopeful that the New Year will usher in a new era of understanding and genuine consultation that will enable us in this House to proceed with our business in a very productive and successful manner. On behalf of this Party, I would like to wish you and everyone else a very peaceful and productive 2008. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you very much Mr Corbin. *[Applause]*

Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon. Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, I would like to extend, on behalf of this side of the House, Members, my sincerest congratulations and best wishes to all Members of the National Assembly, for having served the Parliament well and to you and your family for the best that one can expect for the New Year. That wish also goes to other Members of Parliament, The Clerk, as well as the employees of this Honourable House.

Mr Speaker, 2007 has been a rather productive year. We had thirty-two Sittings in 2007, we had twenty-nine Bills passed, as well as forty Motions, which I think is quite representative for the word that is used very often in this House, a *robust* Parliament. That word is now becoming a cliché, Mr Speaker, in many circles, so is the word *disingenuous*. But I believe that, notwithstanding the clichés that are constantly being bandied about, the work of the Parliament has proceeded well and I believe that, the Guyanese people could say that, there is representative at least on this side of the House. I cannot speak for those on that side of the House, but the Guyanese people could say that, for the Members on this side of the House, we have served their interests well. We have articulated their interest to the best of our ability and in the spirit of good will, I would like to also say that, I believe that the Members of the Opposition, I do not know how well they

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would have represented their constituent, but at least for the purpose of debate and discussion, I believe we did have some *robust* (I use that word again) and some very worthy and productive discussions. I do hope that in 2008, we will move a step beyond where we were in 2007 and thus make the Parliament a truly deliberative and representative body. All the best, Mr Speaker and everyone in this House ...
[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Members

Hon. Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, I therefore wish to move that the House be adjourned, to a date to be fixed.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. Honourable Members, before we adjourn, I would like to invite you, Honourable Members, Members of the Press and others present, to tarry a while in the lounge for some moderate refreshments. Thank you very much.

Adjourned Accordingly At 16:20 H

APPENDIX

POTENTIAL HYDROPOWER SITES IN GUYANA

REF NO.	REGION	NAMES OF SITES	RIVERS	POWER (AV CONTINUOUS ENERGY)	COORDINATES		TOPOGRAPHIC SHEETS	COMMENTS
					LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		
1	1	HOSSORORO	KARIABO	.915 MW	8°-08'-57"	59°-40'-06"	1 SW, SE, NE	
2		MAJURU	ARUNA	.01 MW	8°-04'-30"	60°-11'-50"		
3		DENDYAL	ARUKA	.005 MW	7°-55'-06"	60°-08'-30"		
4		ECLIPSE FALLS	BARIMA	4 MW	7°-37'-06"	60°-03'-24"	4 SE, SW, S SW, SE	Expressions of interest have been invited for Consulting services to study and update available hydrological and other data on this site. This study will be financed through the Hinterland Project Preparation Component of the Unreserved Areas Electrification Programme.
5		TOWAKAIMA	BARAMA	6 MW	7°-18'-58"	59°-57'-18"	9 NE, 10 NW, SW	
	2	NIL						
	3	NIL						
6	4	LOO CREEK	LOO CREEK	.01 MW	6°-15'-00"	59°-46'-30"		
	5	NIL						
7	6	BARRINGTON BROWN	NEW RIVER	7 MW	3°-18'-04"	57°-36'-37"	68 NE, SE, 69 NW, SW	
8		BARRINGTON BROWN FALLS	BARRINGTON BROWN	65 MW	36°-19'-06"	57°-39'-29"	68 NE, SW, NW	

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9	AMARIPA	NEW RIVER	107 MW	3° 07' - 35"	57° - 36' - 29"	68 SE, NE, 69 SW, 73 NW	
10	SABREK	SABREK	7 MW	5° 29' - 34"	59° - 44' - 11"	35 NE, NW, SE, SW	
11	SEBANG	MARAPAKURU	6 MW	5° - 45' - 00"	59° - 45' - 00"	34 NE, NW, SE, SW	
12	TBOKU	MAZARUNI	40 MW	5° - 43' - 35"	59° - 36' - 58"	34 NW, SE, NE, SW, 42 NE	This site will no longer be available once the Upper Mazaruni and Turbuka sites are developed.
13	KABURI	KABURI	6 MW	6° 06' - 41"	58° - 34' - 55"	36 NW, SW, 27 SW	
14	ARIBARU	RESPOUHO	120 MW	6° - 15' - 00"	59° - 46' - 30"	27 SE, NE, 28 SW	In August 2003 the Government signed an MOU with the Guyana Poverty Alleviation Group, a non-governmental organization from the USA, managed by persons of Guyanese origin, which granted an exclusivity period of two years to study this site. This MOU expired with the proposed developer accomplishing minimal or none of its obligations.
15	IKURIBISI	IKURIBISI	0.7 MW	6° - 12' - 34"	58° - 43' - 40"	27 NE, SE, SW, 36 NE, NW	
16	TEPERU	TEPERU	0.1 MW	6° - 15' - 49"	58° - 49' - 49"	27 NE, NW, SW, SE	

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17				320 MW	6°-19'-20"	58°-43'-40"	27 NE, NW, SE, SW	Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a Trinidadian firm ENMAN Services Ltd., which grants the firm a period of exclusivity until July 31, 2008 to carry out studies on the feasibility of this site. In August 2003 the developers completed their pre-feasibility study which confirmed average power output of 650-760 MW. This group is now working on strategies to access about US \$10-15M required to take the project to a bankable status. A request has been made for the grant of an Interim Licence to facilitate the leverage of financing for the full feasibility study. Market options for the power include export of power via underwater High Voltage Direct Current cables.
18		WINPERU	WINPERU	025 MW	6°-11'-45"	59°-27'-15"		
19		KAMARIA	CUYUNI	103 MW	6°-29'-21"	58°-48'-45"	27 NE, NW, SW	
20		OKO BLJE	CUYUNI	162 MW	6°-28'-28"	58°-51'-06"	27 NE, NW, 19 SW	
21		PURUNI	PURUNI	13 MW	6°-20'-11"	59°-19'-14"	26 NE, NW, SW	
22		DEVIL'S HOLE	CUYUNI	62 MW	6°-49'-06"	59°-46'-17"	17 NW, NE, SW, SE	In February 2007 the Government signed an MOU with Guyana Goldfields Inc. which grants the company an exclusivity period of two (2) years to conduct the feasibility study on the development of a hydropower plant to initially supply 35 MW electricity to its mining site at Aurora.
23		CHECHI DIVERSION TO MERUME RIVER	MERUME		5°-49'-59"	59°-56'-04"	34 NW, SW, 33 NE, SE	
24		CHI-GHI	MAZARUNI	96 MW	5°-34'-14"	60°-13'-44"	33 NE, SE, SW, 34 SW	
25		KUMABAU	KURUPUNG	86 MW	6°-08'-20"	60°-20'-36"	24 SW, NW, NE, 33 NW	

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26	UPPER MAZARUNI DIVERSION SCHEME	MERUME	1320 MW	6°-16'-42"	60°-24'-17"	24 NE, NW, SE, SW	Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with two Japanese organizations (JUNIC & KETIC) which granted a period of exclusivity until November 15, 2006 for studies on the site. The proposed developer had conceptualized the development of 1750 MW of firm power at Sand Landing, Mazaruni River to supply a hydrogen based fuel plant which would have also utilized biomass. That MOU ended in November 2006.
27	APAKWA	MAZARUNI	34 MW	6°-21'-17"	60°-22'-26"	24 NW, NE, SW, SE	In February 2007 the Government granted RUSAL exclusive rights for an initial period of three (3) years to conduct a pre-feasibility study of this site. It is intended that the power produced would supply an aluminium smelter.
28	PEAIMA	MAZARUNI	19 MW	6°-23'-15"	60°-35'-32"	23 NE, SE, 24 NW	
29	ARUMAI	MAZARUNI	38 MW	6°-18'-13"	60°-36'-54"	23 NE, SE, 32 NE, SE	
30	CHITGOKENG	MAZARUNI	31 MW	6°-11'-41"	60°-37'-51"	23 SE, NE, 32 NE, SE	
31	SAND LANDING	MAZARUNI	650 MW	6°-00'-28"	60°-39'-44"	23 SE, 32 NE, SE	
32	N° 1 DAM MAURU	MAURU	14 MW	5°-36'-09"	61°-03'-33"	31 SE, NE, 32 SW	
33	GREAT FALLS	KAVARANG	13 MW	5°-41'-25"	61°-07'-14"	31 SE, NE	
34	UTHE	UTHE	17 MW	5°-46'-14"	61°-10'-56"	31 NE, NW, SE	
35	PARTIVA	KAVARANG	26 MW	5°-47'-48"	61°-02'-48"	31 NE, SW, 32 NE, NW	
36	N° 5 DAM ERREKU	ERREKU	1 MW	6°-40'-47"	60°-50'-39"	15 NW, SW, SE, 14 SE	

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49	KONAWAK	KONAWAK	0.05 MW	5°-18'-50"	60°-56'-30"	43 NE, 44 NE, NW, SW	
50	TIBAKITIMARI	POLAKO	34 MW	5°-21'-46"	59°-00'-32"		
51	TIABU	KONAWARIK	6 MW	5°-14'-21"	59°-01'-01"	43 NE, SE, 44 NW, SW	
52	KURUKABARU	CHUNG	0.1 MW	4°-41'-45"	60°-09'-50"		Government intends to utilize grant funds from the UNDP and other donor agencies to study the feasibility of installing a pico hydro system at this site to power a pump for the irrigation of agricultural lands.
53	KATO	CHUNG	3 MW	4°-39'-00"	60°-08'-18"		Expressions of interest have been invited for consulting services to study and update available hydrological and other data on this site. This study will be financed through the Interlink Project Preparation Component of the Unreserved Areas Electrification Programme.
54	MOCO-MOCO	MOCO-MOCO	0.1 MW	5°-21'-41"	59°-45'-00"	64 NE, NW, SE, SW	The Government owns a 0.5 MW hydroelectric power plant developed at this site and commissioned in 1999. From 1999 - 2003 that hydro plant was operated by the Lethem Power Company. In July 2003 the hydro power plant was put out of service due to a landslide in the vicinity. Preliminary restoration works have been estimated at G\$80M - \$110M. In May 2005 the Government leased the hydro plant to the Lethem Power Company for ten years thereby granting the utility the right to seek a simpler alternative option for the rehabilitation works and to operate and maintain the facilities.
9							
55	KUMA	KUMA	0.1 MW	3°-17'-48"	59°-46'-50"	64 NE, NW, SE, SW	
56	COZIER	COZIER	0.1 MW	2°-21'-09"	59°-48'-04"	64 NE, NW, SE, SW	

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57	WAMAKARU	WAMAKARU	2 MW	3°-23'-53"	59°-22'-33"	64 SE, 65 NE, NW, SW
58	MAPAREI	MAPAREI	4 MW	3°-19'-26"	59°-17'-31"	64 SE, 65 NE, NW, SW
59	REWA	REWA	8 MW	3°-15'-30"	58°-44'-00"	66 NE, NW, SE, SW
60	KING GEORGE V	ESSEQUIBO	112 MW	3°-08'-17"	58°-17'-23"	67 NE, NW, SE, SW
61	MANAFOWA	ESSEQUIBO	63 MW	3°-16'-50"	58°-14'-21"	67 NE, NW, SE, SW
62	KING WILLIAM IV	ESSEQUIBO	12 MW	3°-18'-55"	58°-15'-20"	67 NE, NW, SE, SW
63	FAITERRSON	ESSEQUIBO	10 MW	3°-32'-38"	58°-17'-03"	66 NE, NW, SE, SW
64	TAKWARI	ESSEQUIBO	346 MW	4°-58'-28"	58°-51'-00"	51 NW, SW, SE, 44 SW
65	ANARIKA	ANARIKA	0.1 MW	6°-00'-03"	58°-31'-00"	The Trinidadian firm ENMAN was initially granted a period of exclusivity to study this site but preliminary study showed that a vast area would have flooded including the Ivokrama Rainforest Development. That firm was subsequently assigned exclusivity on another site.
66	TIGER HILL	DEMERARA	15 MW	5°-38'-57"	58°-22'-26"	27 SE, NE, 28 SW
67	ITABRU	BERBICE	6 MW	4°-53'-51"	58°-13'-56"	37 NE, NW, SE, SW
						52 NE, NW, SE, SW

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