

**LINDEN FORBES SAMPSON  
BURNHAM, O.E., S.C.**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEECHES**

**VOLUME 3**

**October 1961- October 1962**

Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, O.E., S.C.  
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# Biographical Summary

## **Scholar :**

Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham was born to a Headmaster father and a devout Christian mother on February 20, 1923. His scholastic career is one of the outstanding features of his life. He went from Kitty Methodist School to Central High School and then to Queen's College in 1935 and one year later gained the Centenary Exhibition as well as a Government Junior Scholarship. In 1937, he won the Percival Exhibition Award and in 1942 he won the coveted Guyana scholarship. The war prevented him from proceeding to University overseas and he therefore read externally for a degree from London University. After the war, he proceeded to read Law at Gray's Inn, winning the best speaker's cup in the process. But the Law could not hold him. Politics was in his blood. Several Caribbean Leaders, especially Errol Barrow of Barbados have testified how Burnham and others "*tired the sun with talking*" on all subjects political. The destiny of Guyana and the Caribbean region claimed his attention. Left wing politics attracted him and soon Burnham was involved with the youth arm of the Communist party of Britain and the politics of the Caribbean students.

## **Brilliant Lawyer:**

In 1944, he was awarded the Bachelor of Arts Degree at the External Examination of the University of London. In 1947 he gained with honours, the Bachelor of Laws Degree from the same University. In 1948, at the age of 25, he was admitted to the Bar of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, London. In 1949 he returned home and was admitted to the local Bar. By 1959 he had so established himself as a brilliant lawyer, that he was elected President of the Guyana Bar Association.

## **Politics:**

While a student in London, his keen interest in politics earned him the presidency of the West Indian Students' Union in 1947 and participation as a delegate to the Students' Congresses in Prague in 1947 and Paris in 1948. Upon his return to Guyana he became a co-founder and Chairman of the People's Progressive Party. In 1952, he was elected to the Georgetown City Council where he served as Mayor on two occasions, in 1959 and 1964.

## **First Executive President:**

In 1957, he founded the People's National Congress and served as Leader of the Opposition within the Legislature until 1964 when he became Premier at the head of the People's National Congress / United Force Coalition Government. When Guyana became independent in 1966, he became Prime Minister and with the advent of a new Constitution, he was elected the First Executive President on December 15, 1980, remaining in that position until his death on August 6, 1985.

**International Respect:**

He earned for his country international recognition and the respect of friends and foes alike for his articulation of commitment to the practice of Non-Alignment. He made it clear that he was not prepared to sacrifice Guyana's right to determine its own path of political, economic and social and cultural development. He was also an indefatigable foe of apartheid and was repeatedly praised for the strong support to the liberation struggles in Southern Africa.

**Carifta/Caricom/Carifesta:**

Within the Region, he was a Founding Father of both Carifta and Caricom and was regarded as "*a regional Leader of utmost importance and highest esteem.*" His was the vision of an integrated Caribbean Community of independent people and he worked hard towards making that vision a reality. In the quest for cultural independence, under his leadership, Guyana hosted the first Caribbean Festival of Creative Arts (Carifesta).

**Women's Rights:**

He ensured the passing of legislation which gave children born out of wedlock equal rights with those born of wedlock. A State Paper on Women in 1976 gave birth to three laws - The Equal Rights Act; The Family and Dependants Provision Act and the Married Persons (Property) Amendment Act. These Acts ensured for women equal rights in all spheres of political, economic and social life.

**Concern for Youth:**

His concern for youth was manifested in the establishment of the Guyana National Service which was meant to give early school-leavers additional opportunities and to build in young people a spirit of nationalism and engender a zeal for service to the nation.

**Awards:**

He received Guyana's highest award, the Order of Excellence (O.E.) in 1973. His work as an internationalist earned him the grand Cordan Dh'orde du Mil award from the Government of Egypt, the Jose Marti award from the Government of Cuba in 1975 and an honorary Doctorate of Law from Dalhousie University of Canada. Three countries awarded him their highest awards - in October 1983, Brazil honoured him with the Cruseiro DoSol, in 1984, Bulgaria with the Star of Planinay and in 1985, Yugoslavia with the 'Order of the Red Star'.

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## Election of Speaker: 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1961

**Mr. Burnham:** Mr. Speaker, believe me, I desire to congratulate you most heartily upon your unanimous election today as Speaker of the first Legislative Assembly under the new Constitution. Yours is a high office and your ability to fill it is palpably clear, for those of us who have come over from the old Legislative Council have had the advantage of seeing you occupy that very Chair as Acting Speaker.

Indeed it is an historic occasion; indeed, I think, it is typical of the times present and future for we, the elected representatives of the people, to have chosen a Guianese to be the Speaker of our House. You have promised, during the course of your remarks, to observe that impartiality which, I think, should always be the hallmark of the office of Speaker; and I am led to believe that that promise of yours will be fulfilled not only in spirit, but to the very letter, if my memory of your presiding here last year and this year serves me right, and that is as it should be. It is not for me to deliver a polemic on the duties and attitudes of a Speaker, but I think we will all agree that, without an impartial speaker, this House can well become a farce.

You have been in public life, Mr. Speaker for many years. I recollect it was way back in 1950 when I had the advantage of seeing you returned to the Georgetown Town Council. It was not my good fortune to have joined you around that Table in that year. I remember your return in 1952 to the same Chamber; I remember how you have performed the duties and held the high office of Mayor; I remember also the vigour with which you attacked a certain candidate for Wortmanville/Werk-en-Rust during the 1952 election campaign for the Georgetown Town Council, and I was struck then by the vigour with which you expressed your feelings and your points of view.

I recall, also with interest, the years during which you have served in this very House under another name during the period 1954-57 as a Member of the Interim Government, I also recollect, quite clearly and keenly, the vigour with which you expressed your points of view in those days. It has been my good fortune to have sat about three chairs away from you on this side of the House when, as Nominated Member, you put forward your points of view. There were times when your point of view did not coincide with mine, but still I appreciate the vigour and forthrightness with which you said what you had to say.

You have worked hard in the public service in this country for many a year. I do not want to say that you are an old man, for I do not think you are.

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Burnham:** I think that there remains yet a great deal of vigour in you, and from that vigour, I am sure, we shall benefit from sitting at your feet. You have worked hard. Mr. Speaker, and I think that the honour which you have had conferred upon you this morning is a just reward for your fine service during the past years.

Believe me, sir, I feel so happy that one with whom I have exchanged pleasantries, compliments and uncomplimentary remarks, should be the one who, today, should be the Speaker of this House – one for whose impartiality I have the greatest faith; one for whose ability I have the deepest respect. As I congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, may I say that I speak on behalf of the 11 elected representatives of the People's National Congress who sit around this Table today.

We are moving on to Independence, and if the writing on the wall has been carefully deciphered to me – and I do not think it needs a Daniel to do the interpretation – you, no doubt depending upon the type of Constitution we have, will be the Speaker of an Assembly of an Independent Guiana. Since I hope to be here, I shall not anticipate my congratulations when that time arrives. But, permit me to say, Mr. Speaker that I wish you every success in your new office - an office and Chair which I think you will fill both intellectually and physically. I will not join with the Premier in wishing you prosperity, for I think the Lord has blessed you with that already, but rather should wish you good health and a high sense of social duty, a high sense of patriotism in the execution of what, undoubtedly, will be an onerous task which falls to be performed by you, our Speaker. Congratulations Mr. Speaker, and once more congratulations.

## Appreciation of Governor's Address: 18<sup>th</sup> October, 1961

**Mr. Burnham:** Mr. Speaker, I really want to make an inquiry as to this procedure because, as I understand it, a Motion thanking the Sovereign or the Sovereign's representative for his or her Gracious Speech is normally a Motion on which there is debate on Government's policy. Perhaps, Sir, the Hon. Mover of this Motion can indicate what is proposed in this instance for, as I notice, there is a second Motion to the effect that this Legislative Assembly approves of the Government's policy. I am a little confused as to the intention of the Government. You will pardon my being confused because I am not very *au fait* with these things. Perhaps the Minister can indicate if this Motion is intended as a means of criticizing or accepting Government's policy and whether it is in the tradition for a Minister of the Government to move such a Motion; for I have done the thumbing of some pages of various *Hansards* in and out of this country and it seems unusual for a Minister to move a Motion relating to Government's policy or thanking the Sovereign or the Sovereign's representative for his or her Gracious Speech. Maybe it is new form of procedure or, maybe, Government has not appreciated that it is moving on to a new stage of constitutional advancement where there will be no need to thank the Governor as some people feel. Not that I have anything against the expression of sincere appreciation and thanks to His Excellency the Governor for his "Gracious" Speech, but I, perhaps, can get some information from the Chair on what procedure we will adopt or what precedent will be laid down for this Legislature from henceforth.

## Motion on the Approval of Government's Policy: 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1961

**Mr. Burnham:** Mr. Speaker, His Excellency the Governor in his Speech from the Throne used the term "*history-making*" in relation to his Speech; and I think he had a colleague in the acting Premier who, when I questioned the procedure, pointed out the unusualness of the circumstances, and I can see that it is history-making. I grant the Governor the uniqueness of the occasion on which, for the first time in the history of this country, or Legislature, has the Governor acted as the mouthpiece of his Ministers.

That is why I cannot understand the correctness or desire not to criticize the Speech directly which seems implied in the fact of our having two Motions in respect of the Same Speech. For everyone knows the Constitutional Monarch is not informed on matters of policy. As a matter of fact the survival of the Constitutional Monarch is dependent upon his or her recognition of the fact that it is the elected Government that does all the thinking and writing.

The Hon. acting Premier did say that there was a departure from what we thought would have been the normal procedure of having a Back-Bencher move the present Motion; but because of certain specific reasons, because of the historic nature of the occasion, and because he desired to make certain comments on Independence, this procedure was followed. I do not suppose what when the next occasion arises he will have that excuse because, as I understand it, one of his colleagues, the Hon. Member for Corentyne Central, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Natural Resources, said that Independence must and will come.

Perhaps it is apposite for me to make some comments on this question of Independence. I do not join with those obstructionists, seeking a bubble reputation, who would suggest that Independence should mean Independence only for the original inhabitants of this country. I desire to assert that Independence *per se* is a subject on which, I think, the greater majority of this House has agreed. Though, I am afraid, that I shall have to break lances with the Hon. Member for Corentyne Central, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Natural Resources, when he observes that Independence is Independence. So far as I am aware Portugal has Independence; so far as I am aware South Africa has Independence. If, as is my contention, Independence is a state which ought to come to a country and give its people an opportunity to develop their abilities to the fullest extent and exploit the resources in the interest and for the benefit of the entire community; if my premise on Independence and what it ought to be and what purpose it should serve is correct then, of course, it seems impossible for me to agree that Independence is Independence.

I do not propose to be in breach of the Standing Orders and to anticipate the substantive Motion which I have noticed on the Notice Paper in the

name of the Premier, but may I observe *en passant* that if the Government saw it fit in this Speech from the Throne to allude to its desire to have Independence within a very short time, it might have condescended in a few sentences to have given some idea or outline of the type of the type of State we are to have when Independence comes.

It was in April, 1960, on Sunday morning in Venezuela where I attended the Colonial Commission of the Second Inter-American Conference for Democracy and Freedom when the present Premier and a colleague of his, who must be aware of his identity, voted against a Motion in respect of free elections, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press, etc. Perhaps I would have desired some explanation of the way the Premier and his colleague voted on that memorable Sunday, because it might have indicated what was the attitude of the Government. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. We shall have the Motion and we shall be able to discuss the various attitudes and causes. But it is not enough in this context for a stripling or political neophyte to come here and lecture us, and say who is for or against Independence. The remarks of the particular Hon. Member I forgive and credit them to youthful ebullience and the enthusiasm of the tyro. I shall prefer, at this stage, to consider the other subjects raised in what has been politely described as "*the Gracious Speech of His Excellency the Governor*".

But before I proceed to discuss certain Heads in detail, may I observe that for such an historic document it is rather short. I refuse to accept the facile excuse tendered by the Hon. Member for Corentyne Central that the Governor's time was limited. The Governor is the servant of the Government; the Governor is the mouthpiece of his Government, and the length of the Speech is dictated by the Premier.

It is no sense coming here and telling us that this was not intended to be a Development Programme. Since literacy in English is one of the qualifications of persons who desire to contest seats for the Legislative Assembly, we are aware of the fact that it is not a Development Programme, and since it is such an historic document; since it is supposed to outline not only what the Government proposes to do during the next twelve months but what it proposes to do during this transitional period – in fact, what it proposes to do and the direction it proposes to take during the next four years – it is little short of insolence or, shall I put a more favourable interpretation, misplaced sophistry to remind us that this document is not a Development Programme. At least, it could have outlined for us, in clear detail, what direction the Development Programme will take. I, for one, did not expect them to burden us with a number of figures. I had not expected them to burden us with a number of details as to how many Black Bush Polders they will set up; how many more research stations at Mon Repos they will build, although they have not voted money for them. I did not expect it; but I expected something more in amplification of the direction which our Development Programme would take. It is no excuse on the part of Government that it did not have time; for the Government of today, with certain slight and insignificant changes, was the Government of

yesterday. And in any case—I said changes, not additions – this Government had, as far as I can see, two months during which to prepare and adumbrate its policy even if it had been a new Government.

We are, of course, told one point in the paragraph which deals with planning and planning units, that such planning would be along sound theoretical and practical lines to ensure the socialist objective. I shall have cause, when considering some of the Heads, to inquire what exactly is meant by “*socialist*” in the context of this Speech. May I perhaps, anticipate briefly and say it is a little difficult to understand a socialist Government becoming a moneylender so far as education is concerned. We shall discuss that in detail later. I am talking about “*socialist objective*”. I am reminded of what I heard on the radio a few nights ago when our Hon. Premier was meeting the press and he said that though he is a socialist he will not permit that to interfere with the development of this country. It is a strange statement and one which I would have expected his *locum tenens* would have explained; and, perhaps, in his reply he will make a successful or unsuccessful attempt to explain it, because I cannot imagine that there is anything inconsistent between socialism and development of an emerging territory like Guiana. But I think it was John Ruskin who said that there are certain chameleon words which change their meanings with the persons who use or utter them. I notice the Hon. Minister of Finance has found his voice. I had hoped that this gentleman would, at least, have said something about Government’s financial policy, but he sat there like a deaf mute and suddenly found his voice when seated. I suppose some of us do need a good deal of stimulus to raise us from our seats. But I am a little puzzled by the statement of the Premier that though he is a socialist he will not allow that to interfere with the development of this country. I am not going to attempt to read minds. All I am merely going to ask is what must be the concept of socialism on the part of the PPP if, in the mind of its leader, there is a possibility of its interfering with the development of Guiana? As for me and my concept of socialism, I do not see any inconsistency between holding that ideology and development of a country like Guiana.

I was remarking, earlier, on the shortcomings of the Speech; and that leads me to observe that there has been a great deal of justified criticism of the things that are not said in the Speech—the contents thereof are disappointing for what is not said, what is not outlined, what is not indicated. There are a few catch phrases, of course, like “*the policy of democratization*” which would find effect in the local government policy. There is, of course, a fact on which they must be complemented—that adult suffrage will be the basis of election to local government councils. I like to give the devil his due. I agree with them, for instance, that it is time that that survival from a prehistoric age, the Local Government Board, be abolished and the Home Minister have full responsibility for local government. But what are the responsibilities which are to be given to

local government councils and institutions? It would not have taken many more words to have set out these responsibilities: health perhaps, education perhaps, but everything has been left vague, as usual. Do not talk about the continued financial assistance by way of grants and loans. Let us know whether there is a change of policy with respect to grants and loans – whether you are going to continue to be a number of moneylenders.

I remember once a Minister who, in fact, is no longer in the House, pointing out to me, when I criticized in the past the Legislative Council for the six percent interest on unpaid rates, that if the people could not find the money they could go to the moneylenders. Tell us whether you are continuing to be the usurers to the Local Government institutions. I would have hardly used the words “*Father Christmas*”. Yes, the Father Christmas the Christians speak of. I would have used the words: a Government mindful of its responsibilities; a Government that realize that local government institutions have an important part to play; a government that might have been ashamed of the fact that in the British Commonwealth in which, I understand, the Premier says Guiana will continue to have independence, gives about the lowest of subsidy, aid or grants to local Government institutions.

It is all right to say that you will now proceed to implement the Greater Georgetown Plan. I shall not anticipate the Bill which shall be brought before this House because I do not know what will be the new provisions. I am aware of the fact that the Government now has at its disposal one who has had some experience in the drafting of some of the earlier legislation and one who will now be responsible, for some time I hope, for the drafting of all Bills. But this is what I want to say with respect to the Greater Georgetown and New Amsterdam. I would have expected that the Government would have given an indication as to whether it would stick to the provision of the earlier Bill that was introduced in the Legislative Council.

It is improper to address the Speaker, personally, but, perhaps, someone who sat about three seats away from me in the old Legislative Council will remember that those of us who were Members of the Georgetown Town Council criticized the stringency with which it was proposed to control the Greater Georgetown Town Council when, mind you, there was to be democratization. Mind you, there was to be greater responsibility for these local government agencies and councils; mind you, the people who operate in them were to be given the opportunity to feel free to experiment within the ambit of a broad national policy. No indication whatsoever. I am sorry my learned and Hon. Friend, the Minister of Home Affairs, is absent for I want, at this stage, to congratulate him upon the skill and sophistry with which he sought to explain why Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1958 has not yet been implemented through no fault of the Government.

*Sotto voce* almost he said that the Government was misadvised as to timing by its advisers. Why didn't they tell us before that they had been

misadvised as to timing? Incidentally, was it a question of staff? I notice in the Development Estimates of 1960, that only \$43,300 was supposed to have been spent by the end of 1960 when \$120,000 had originally been appropriated under Local Government for staff and expert advice. I am afraid that so far as I am concerned the excuse for not having implemented the policy adumbrated in Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1958, given this evening by the Minister of Home Affairs, is unconvincing.

I was observing that the explanation was unconvincing with respect to the God-like slot of Government in implementing the proposals in Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1958, but I admire the skill of the advocate when he sought to embroil in this sloth the then Hon. Member for Georgetown Central (Mr. Burnham) who in 1959 was mayor of Georgetown. Certainly at that time I supported the suspension of elections in 1958, so that the administrative arrangements and changes could have been made, but the Minister of Communication Development and Education as he then was, did not give the Legislature at that time any indication that the new Constitution would have found the Greater Georgetown Plan unimplemented.

Of course it is a man's democratic right, it is the party's democratic right, it is the Governments' democratic right to say something in its own defence, and that I do not for one moment begrudge my learned and Hon. Friend. But even here in 1961 when we are supposed to be regaled with what this Government plans to do for this entire country, to make it a socialist country, all we hear is *"We are going to do something about Georgetown and New Amsterdam and the Molson Creek District Council."* In what stages will the Marshal recommendations be implemented we are not told. No doubt it is an oversight; no doubt the Premier was not sufficiently rested from his brief holiday to formulate these things more definitely after consulting with his Ministers.

We are going to have a Planning Unit. A Planning Unit, it is written in the Speeches, is going to be set up. I do not propose to criticize Professor Charles Bettelheim for, unlike some people, I believe a shoemaker should stick to his last. I do not know, and I am not going to say anything about Professor Bettelheim's qualifications, but what I wish to say is this: are we to understand that the services of Professor Bettelheim were not available before? Are we to understand that if his services were not available before, the services of an alternative but, I hope, equally distinguished economist were not available? If his services were not available, and if the services of an alternative economist were not available, why did this Government not tell the public that it had recognized the necessity for a Planning Unit but had been unable to procure the services of a sufficiently distinguished, competent and experienced Professor or economist? I am led to believe that it was only last year that the Government recognized the necessity for a Planning Unit.

I remember in 1957, in another Legislature, raising this point and being told by the then Minister of Natural Resources, who at that time was the

travelling companion of the Minister of Trade and Industry, but who later fell from grace, that in the opinion of his Party there was no necessity for an Economic Planning Unit, and in any case they were not really interested in seeking advice from bourgeois economists. I am one of those shoemakers who will stick to his last. I am just observing what was obviously a singular disregard of the interests of the country by the Government, or the ignorance which prevented it from appreciating what was necessary. We are told that we are going to get a good young man from India. Obviously, I must assume that there are no good young men of Guianese origin. I am not saying that a good young man from India may not fill the bill. The acting Premier did not condescend to details, and I have not therefore had an opportunity to do any research to make any inquiries. But what is a little unusual is that now that the necessity for a Planning Unit has been recognized, this Government still continues to put the cart before the horse. I recall quite vividly, and, I hope, accurately, the first trip by the then Minister of Trade and Industry (Dr. Jagan) with his colleague, the Minister of natural Resources, in 1958 when the Government at that time was requesting \$200 million for its Development Programme. I remember also that on their return they both praised the then Governor, Sir Patrick Renison, for the kind services he had rendered to them on the trip abroad, and how he had show so much interest in Guiana. And with equal vividness and accuracy I recall that the same gentleman made the remark that it was impossible to get money to finance the Development Programme on "*guesstimates*."

It is said that between \$58 million to \$500 million will be necessary for the development of British Guiana and an assault on the poverty of our land, but from what we read in the Speech, and from what we have heard from the lips of the acting Premier, it would appear that these varying sums which have been mentioned with such facility have not been arrived at after a study of collation of data or anything by a Planning Unit. It may seem almost the advice of conservative caution, but I think that it is sound commonsense that before issuing a number of guesses as to what is necessary for the development of this country, the Government ought to have had a Planning Unit set up, and have had the first report. I do not know whether \$500 million is the correct sum, or whether \$58 million is the correct sum, and I daresay that Government itself does not know.

These interruptions in lighter vein — they afford me some mental rest. I do not know whether the Government itself knows whether either of these sums would be the proper sum because, as I understand it from my very limited reading, there are a number of factors which determine the amount of money this country, or any other country's economy can absorb over a particular period, including the nature, training and experience of personnel available, and perhaps our good Government might have been advised if it had got Planning Unit on its feet and being in possession of technical details and data before running around in circles in North America for

money. I am not suggesting that they should not go to North America to ask for money, but I suggest that we should be in receipt of technical and reliable data and details before doing so.

I notice that this Government has been receiving helpful advice from time to time from visiting economists on the staff of the University College of the West Indies. I wonder whether, in view of the fact that helpful advice has been forthcoming from time to time from visiting economists on the staff of the University of the West Indies, Government has thought of consulting that institution as to the availability of personnel for setting up a Planning Unit or for advising on specific problems and matters?

I cannot say those words very well. I think I hear from the young Hon. Member from the U.C.W.I that the pronunciations are "O'Louglin". She came here some time ago and made certain observations on the rice industry. I seem to recall Dr. Newman, also from the University College of the West Indies, coming here and making certain comments on the Development Programme for 1960—64. The Hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics informs me unofficially that Dr. Farley has given some helpful advice, but I am not aware of that. I would like to ask how helpful had been the advice of Miss O'Louglin and Dr. Newman, if both of them have agreed that the continued emphasis in the Development Programme on putting more land under rice can be explained only on political and social rather than on economic grounds? How helpful has been their advice?

I notice in this Programme, which comes to an end in 1961, the continued emphasis on rice is remarkable. In fact the Hon. Member for Corentyne Central remarked that the rice industry is so efficient because of Government's policy that more people want to get land to cultivate rice. It was the same Hon. Member, delivering a pedagogue here, who advised us on this side of the Table that it is necessary for politicians to have long memories. I agree. It is necessary for young politicians to have long memories about what their Leader says. In 1959 the Leader of the Government, now the Premier, got up in this House and admitted that rice is a marginal crop. I remember that the present Speaker was then Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board, and he expressed some fear about markets for rice. But in spite of the fact that fears with respect to markets were expressed by the then Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board, the Premier seems set on rice as a marginal crop. We know that rice has to be heavily subsidized by this Government and the taxpayers. We hear that the Hon. Minister of Trade and Industry says he has new markets for rice. More of that anon.

I wonder why, after a visit by two economists from the University College of the West Indies, there is still this great emphasis on rice? I am ready to learn. The Ministers say that they are anxious to have economists taking part in planning a programme for this country. I am happy to observe, as the Hon. Member for Berbice River, the saying: "*He who wears the shoe knows where the pinch is.*" Those who suffer know where it hurts.

But when His Excellency said:

*“My Ministers are, however, anxious that the people themselves should play part in planning,”*

I thought that was carrying the quip too far. How on earth can the people share in planning? I see here:

*“Much thought has been given to this question and it has been decided that the Regional Development Committee, which have been functioning recently, mainly as an adjunct of the Credit Corporation, should be asked to prepare plans for their areas.”*

With all the goodwill in the world, can these Regional Development Committees make any sound contribution to planning – without expert advice and assistance? Leaving it as it is one gets the impression that these Regional Development Committees are going to be asked to draw up plans. They will be able, perhaps, to give some idea of what they consider to be good for the country, but, in the absence of expert advice, I cannot see how these Regional Development Committees can make a positive contribution to planning. We are planning a Development Programme which is going to cost money whether it be by way of contribution from surplus revenue, low interest loans or interest-free loans. It seems to me that to mix up self-help with planning is not to understand the score.

As I understand it, the self-help project will represent what has been planned, and self-help projects cannot represent planning. In spite of the obvious amusement which I see from the younger Members on the opposite side of the Table, I can recognize greater maturity from the southern side which agrees with my proposition.

I note the alacrity and speed with which there was this trip abroad to get money – I know how much. I understand it is \$500 million, and perhaps the Hon. Member for Georgetown Central can help Government to get that amount. However, he does not believe in Government running enterprises. I observed earlier that the speed with which there was this trip abroad for money did not make sense, unless a Planning Unit was set up to prepare the necessary data. My criticism has turned out to be sound, in spite of the guffaws.

On page 3 of the Speech, writes the Premier and says the Governor:

*“When the Planning Unit begins its work it will urgently consider the present priorities in the Development Programme and will doubtless advise changes that will take account of the finances that can be mobilized, but it is possible now to indicate the main features of the Development Programme on which my Government proposes to embark.”*

It is anticipated that this Planning Unit will most probably have to make recommendations with respect to the priorities in the Development Programme, I dare say with respect to the entire Development Programme. What is all this hurry? It seems to me that it is better to wait for data scientifically propounded – I do not appreciate to the urgency of the unemployment problem? I think I appreciate this more than many who do not appreciate the urgency of the problem – the hunger and starvation in this country. Those who, unlike me, have never known what it is to starve will think it a joke, but that I credit to youthful ebullience. I appreciate the urgency and starvation, but it seems to me that hurrying now, without proper data, is not going to yield results and in the end it will be necessary to wait until data are prepared before you can proceed on a programme on the basis of which you will get loans whether they be interest-free, or at low interest rates. Perhaps this is a convenient time to adjourn, Sir.

## Motion on the Approval of Government's Policy (cont.): 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1961

**Mr. Burnham:** I believe that when the adjournment was taken last evening I was making reference to the Planning Unit which, according to the outline of Government's policy in the Governor's Speech, it is proposed to set up, and I was alluding to the fact that latent in the reference to this Planning Unit is an admission on the part of the Government that its proposed Development Plan, or changes thereto, cannot really be undertaken with definiteness until a Planning Unit comes into existence. In these circumstances I questioned the wisdom or the usefulness of going off on a money mission, allegedly for the purpose of development of the country when, obviously, there was a great deal of data and information yet to be ascertained and, no doubt, submitted to those who are intended lenders. It is not my desire to be repetitious, but I wish to remind myself where I left off.

Before we proceed to further consideration of the Speech, the policy of the Government, it is perhaps apposite to decide by what criteria the Government's policy must be judged. I think it is accepted that regardless of the ideological beliefs of any government, one criterion against which its policy is to be judged or measured is that of effectiveness, efficiency, and its ability to battle with the problems of the country. I shall use that particular criterion in the course of my other observations and contributions. But since this Government has, through the mouth of the Governor, chosen to set as its goal a socialist objective, we may perhaps also adopt that criterion in considering this Speech and policy.

I expressed some concern last night about the remark of the Hon. Premier (Dr. Jagan) at the Press Conference in New York which I had the privilege of listening to on the radio earlier this week. The remark went something like this: *"Though I am a socialist I will not allow that to interfere with the development of British Guiana."* I am concerned that the Premier considered that it was at all possible for socialism to be in any way inconsistent with the development of British Guiana, and I wonder, in the circumstances, what he meant by that, because we see the term *"socialist"* used here in the Speech. Now, as I understand it (and I do not purport to be a lecturer on these subjects) 'socialist' connotes, if I may put it succinctly, production for the needs of the many as distinct from production for the profits of a few, and as a concomitant to socialism one expects to find such a distribution of the wealth of a country after its exploitation as would be in the interests of the majority rather than the interests of a few. That, as I understand it, briefly distinguishes socialism from the capitalist system under which this country has lived and laboured so long.

Now, if that concept of socialism is shared by the Premier, what exactly did he mean when he said he was a socialist but he would not allow that to

interfere with the development of this country? It is perhaps that he has some other concept or idea of socialism? It is perhaps that he equates socialism, or that he equated socialism in his mind on Monday night with a dictatorship? Is it that he equated it with the stifling of initiative? Perhaps it would be unfair to suggest what he must have equated it with, especially as he is absent today, but one must appreciate, and so must the Premier, that when he makes these observations they immediately set persons thinking. I then begin to wonder whether the use of the word "*socialist*" in this Speech really has the same connotation which I would normally place on it. Perhaps the acting Premier, Mr. Benn, may be in a position to tell us exactly what his Party Leader means by "*socialism*"?

May I say that one thing about socialism I think would be commonly accepted is that one who claims to be socialist should be able to rid himself of certain snobberies and prejudices and, perhaps, the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics might, before he attempts shouting from the house-top about his being a socialist or to teach socialism, do some brain-cleaning and mental adjustment. For I understand that, in what he considered a humorous passage yesterday, he queried whether a seller of fowl feed could become an authority on finance.

Perhaps I have mixed up the two underlings or Parliamentary Secretaries. I have no interest in finding out where they serve, except that I can identify the speaker as the Hon. Member for Corentyne Central and there is no error at all. I would imagine that that type of remark was not the type of remark one would expect from a socialist. I, as a socialist, would not have made any remark on the unsuitability of a mason to fill a ministerial office, because that would not be socialism. It would be removal from one stage of snobbery to another stage of snobbery under the capitalist system from which, I understand, we are seeking to escape.

Out of my perusal of this document, I would say that one would seek in vain for the golden thread of socialism. One would seek in vain to see the suggestions of proposed plans having in them a socialist pattern. Already the Hon. Member of Campbellville (Mr. Bissember) has referred to the fact that, under the Head of agricultural crop for consumption by the Guianese people, greater emphasis is placed on export, which is exactly the type of economy under which British Guiana has been travelling for so long. It is concentrating on export rather than the production of crops to meet the needs of the people and for consumption by the population. That is why one has to find that sugar, bauxite and perhaps, rice, are still important products. Sugar is produced for the export market; rice is produced for the export market; bauxite is produced for the export market.

It is not that a socialist would eschew or in any way condemn export trade, but I would have expected that a true socialist Government, in this context, would have placed greater emphasis on the production of crops to be consumed in this country. It is appalling that in an agricultural country one is going to have canned peas, canned beans, canned tomato juice and

so on. That, I concede, is something for which the old colonial system has been responsible. But during the process of four years, certainly one would have expected to have seen a change and, at least, an attempt being made to produce those things which we can produce. One would have expected that we would have endeavoured to do away with these shopkeepers who are dependent entirely upon importation of foodstuffs which we can produce ourselves and at the same time execute a saving so far as available foreign currency is concerned, which can be utilized for the purchase of capital goods to assist in the setting up of industries which will not only bring increased production and wealth to the country, but will provide direct employment for some of those who are at the moment unemployed.

The absence of imagination on the part of this Government has been further reflected in the pride with which there is reference to the fact that the sugar producers have been persuaded to give up a large percentage of land, which they do not now occupy productively, to peasants for cane-farming. I concede that it would be preferable, in view of the yield per acre, that the peasants be encouraged, in normal circumstances, to produce cane rather than rice. But how much sense is there in placing this great emphasis on the production by peasants of sugar cane? The emphasis is not on the phrase 'by peasants', but on 'production of sugar cane'. How much imagination or sense is there, at this late stage, in the context of Britain's entering the European Common Market? As I see it, there is wisdom in the Premier's not agreeing to acquiesce in the request of one Mr. Ishmael to nationalize the sugar estates—wisdom not merely from an ideological point of view. As I see it, in the first place, we are a high-cost producer; in the second place, sugar is on its way out and it is only being kept alive thanks to the Commonwealth preference. And, in the circumstances of Britain's entry into the European Common Market, the future of sugar becomes even more tenuous.

It would, indeed, be a pity if a large number of our peasant farmers were encouraged to switch to sugar at this crucial time and we were to discover, like those invested in sugar plantations in Essequibo just before the end of the First World War, that we had invested in vain. There seems to be more promise in the proposal to embark upon the production of bananas. The banana market does not seem as hazardous, difficult and unreliable as does the sugar market.

We have been told by the Hon. acting Premier that negotiations are at this moment going on, or soon to be going on, between the Premier, the substantive holder of the post, and Elders and Fyffes, the representatives of the United Company, with respect to their taking what bananas we may produce. There has not been, either in the Governor's Speech or in the Hon. acting Premier's contribution, a sufficient amount of detail for us to be able to say whether or not the scheme is good one. I shall, however, be tolerant; I do not want to be critical because they have not had time, and have not yet got over campaigning.

But I would like to make this observation: I hope this socialist Government will see to it that whatever arrangement it comes to with Elders and Fyffes, a subsidiary of the United Fruits Company, the interests of Guiana and Guianese people will be protected fully because, unless I am mistaken, one of the most uncharitable exploiters in this part of the world of undeveloped countries is the United Fruit Company which has virtually ruled places like Guatemala, Panama and other South American Republics and has not been without its influence for the worse. I hope that our interests will be well protected. I give that suggestion for what it is worth, in that hope that, perhaps, the Hon. Member for Corentyne Central will recognize that we are willing to assist where there is a sufficient receptive and absorptive mind in the place where policy is made.

May I for a moment, perhaps, make a few observations in the inconsistency of pattern in the contribution made by the Hon. Member who, with more enthusiasm than wisdom, one of the hallmarks of inexperience, yesterday said that he would have been happy if there had been constructive criticism. Later on he went on to say: *"Do you expect us to take your advice, when you cannot run a Party and you cannot win an election?"* He will mature in time. I see in him a young and rising hope and, in time, as the rough edges are knocked off or filed off, he will become not a rare jewel but at least a jewel of some worth.

To return to the question of this Government's policy on agriculture, I cannot help but observe that obviously there is a marked anxiety to expend a great deal of money on the rice industry. I am most conscious of the fact the rice industry has made a definite contribution to the economy of this country, but I am also conscious of the fact that the taxpayer has been called upon time and again to make a sizable contribution to this industry. I am mindful of a statement by the Premier that rice is a marginal crop. I welcome the intention so sketchily stated in the Speech in relation to making use of by-products, but, unless and until there is a careful and proper scientific assessment of the possibility in that direction as to the economic feasibility, this Government will be well advised to forget its great interest in rice.

It is not that the rice industry should be thrown aside, but rather than putting so much more land under rice; rather than patting themselves on the shoulders today, acrobats that they are, admit to it now and say that they have not successfully and competently run their rice industry, despite their pronouncement that many thousands of people want more land for rice. Rather than continue that type of thing, it would be better for them to stop for a moment and think.

It seem to me that the Premier's statement to which I had referred earlier, which was made way back in 1959 if my recollection is correct, is another way of conceding what has been stated by two visiting economists, that the emphasis on rice production in this country can be justified not on economic grounds but, perhaps, on social and political grounds. It may be

a very pleasing thing; it may be good politics to emphasize this crop at the cost of the taxpayers—to spend \$1500 per rice farmer family at the cost of the taxpayers—but there will come a time, as it came in Ceylon, if things continue at the rate at which they are going at the moment, that those very same rice farmers will recognize that they had been betrayed and that their short term interests were not consistent with their long term interests and that, in the end, we have put too much into the rice basket.

The rice market which we have at the moment with the West Indies, I understand at the moment, the Minister of Trade and Industry is not particularly keen on keeping. Well, he must know. He is the one set in authority. But to me, one who is not entirely devoid of intelligence, it seems tomfoolery for a Minister to shout: *“We do not care about the West Indies market; we are going to supply them as we want and when we want”*, without having firm contracts for the supply of rice to other parts of the world, or other markets. I agree it can be irritating if, from the point of view of the seller, the buyer is unreasonable, if the seller believes that he puts up a good case; but many a legal tyro believes he has put up a good case, which can be utterly destroyed by one who is more experienced. But this sort of puerile voicing of one’s irritation in the public does not augur well for a Minister unless, of course, he has a trick up his sleeves and he had got another market.

I recall that a certain Hon. Member, then Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board, did, I think publicly, but I am sure privately, admit to me that the parabola or graph with respect to rice had taken a downward trend from 1959 –1960. I think 1959 -1960 was the last point upward and the trend after that was downward. And that gentleman is a gentleman with great experience. That gentleman, I think is, or was, I understand, a Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce. That gentleman is an outstanding businessman—one of the most outstanding in the country of Guiana; a man who has experience; and if after studying all the facts that was the conclusion that he came to, does not it seem a little unwise to be saying *“we do not care about the present markets”*?

There are two difficulties which must arise in these circumstances: (a) the reliability of the alternative markets if, in fact, these exist; and (b) the prices you are going to get as compared with the present prices. As a matter of fact, the price graph is showing a downward trend. It is in that context that one finds the statement of the Minister of Trade and Industry unwise. It is in that context that we find there is a continued over-emphasis on the production of rice. There is a Chinese quip: *“He who plants rice plays dice”*.

Mr. Speaker, there is one advantage about these Standing Orders in that one can be assured of at least half-a-minute’s rest between rounds of 15 minutes.

So let this Government beware because it may well be laying up for itself treasures in Hell.

I am not unaware of the various statements made by the acting Premier and in the Governor's Speech, of the intention of this Government to diversify agriculture, but we seldom seem to get further than this statement. We understand that cocoa is going to be undertaken. I understand there is going to be some cooperative between Bookers and the Government with regard to cocoa cultivation. I am interested to see how this cooperation is going to be worked out between Bookers of all people, and the Government as the elder brother, in an undertaking of which Government is a partner. I shall attempt, however, to pour cold water on this flame which is now peeping out.

May I ask, however, whether there is provision, if, as is agreed that agriculture must for sometime be the mainstay, for a much more comprehensive scheme for the training of agriculturists or would-be agriculturists to provide technical assistance and advice to those who would farm and who have no other means of livelihood? It is one of the most distressing features of a visit to the riverain areas like Canje, Berbice, and the Pomeroon to hear the complaints by farmers in those areas as to the rare occasions on which they have the advantage of a few minute's consultation with or advice from an agricultural adviser. In one case I was told they had seen an agricultural officer once in 18 months. So while this Government says that agriculture will be for sometime our mainstay, it seems to me that it does not appreciate that, to make this our mainstay and worthwhile, not only will the training of persons who are young farmers be necessary, but also a larger technical staff than at the moment exist. I think it proposes to set up some sort of institution at Mon Repos—the same institution for which money was voted in 1960 and not used. I hope that it comes into being. I hope that it serves its purpose; and I hope, also, that Government will realize the necessity to have a larger number of technical staff.

It seems to me that when one looks at the paragraphs which had been written and spoken on agriculture, there is nothing new; nothing revolutionary. Distribution of lands, so what? Even the Interim Government, as you know, had proposed to distribute lands. Land reclamation—nothing new. More rice—nothing new. Even the Interim Government thought that it was politically wise to attempt to capture the loyalty of those who grow or would grow rice.

This Government is the lineal successor of its predecessor, therefore it cannot be heard to say that it did not have time to prepare, properly, a statement such as the one which is before us in the Governor's Speech. If they had come into office for the first time, one could have understood. It is not for me to give any advice as to what it may put forward because, though one Member of the governing Party facetiously and with a certain amount of sophistry attempted to pooh-pooh the idea of their being borrowers, I must say they are fairly competent borrowers—at least when they write down that they borrow.

I notice, for instance, that Government will have a team of “*El Dorados*” — a straight borrowing from *The New Road*. I have always assumed that the one Minister who was most literate was that for the Works and Hydraulics. And though one of the Parliamentary Secretaries — I do not know who is the Parliamentary Secretary; you will pardon me — said that it was never published, we know that it was first outlined on the 5<sup>th</sup> March when the Premier was present at the house of one Mr. Rayman; and we know, also, that it was published in sequence in *The New Nation*. You have a copy as a courtesy in exchange for the copy of the *Thunder* you sent me. As I said before, it is little short of facetiousness to suggest that it was never published, because I know that Hon. Members on the other side do some reading.

But to return to the Speech and to consider for a moment the Section on Industrialization, I remember that once a certain gentleman appeared in one of the conference rooms of the House of Commons — I think it was about eight years ago — and was told by a certain other gentleman: “*Now, you see we do not say that you are this or that, but you seem to have a fondness for certain terms which leads us to certain impressions.*” I notice that twice in the sections on Industrialization and Interior Development we find these phrases, “*complex of industries*” and “*industrial complex*”. These terms sound all so well and good:

*“The Government has particularly in mind a complex of industries based on rice, on wood and on bauxite.”*

I really cannot understand them. Does it mean that this is what the emphasis is going to be on — rice, wood and bauxite in the industrial field? Can the Government give us some more definite idea of its attitude and its programme for industries? It is all well to talk about a “*complex of industries based on rice, wood and bauxite*”, but how do you propose to base the industrial development of the country upon them? On what will be the emphasis at first, and what will be the ultimate goal? What do you mean by a complex on bauxite? Do you mean that you want to have more bauxite mines; that you are satisfied with the mere production of alumina, or do you have in mind something of the nature of that which is forecast or intended in Surinam, where the bauxite company has undertaken that within 10 years of the completion of the hydroelectric scheme it will process its bauxite into aluminium?

It that is what Government means, tell us. Tell us that this Government proposes that the wealth of this country should no longer be drained out to Canada so far as bauxite is concerned. Government has already given an undertaking, for what it is worth, that it will not expropriate the Demerara Bauxite Company, but I will not deal with that at the moment, because whether it does or does not, a progressive Government and a Government interested in the country and its people ought to have a scheme for the

production of aluminium in this country, and it is not enough to use this sort of rolled-up phrase about "*a complex of industries based on rice, on wood and on bauxite.*" I heard that for the first time when the Premier returned from the negotiations with respect to the package deal on electricity. Since then we have had no further explanation, and it is unfair.

May I at this stage ask, since there is this continued interest in this complex, which includes wood, why is there no mention of the attractive deal which was supposed to have been carried out with Cuba, in which Cuba was to advance so much money at a very low rate of interest and lend certain experts for the development of our timber industry, and this money was to be paid back, as I understand it, by the supply of timber products? Why do we see nothing about it in the Speech, especially in view of the fact that the Government has in mind "*a complex of industries based on rice, on wood and on bauxite?*" Because now the Government really has power.

I had understood from one who had been a Member to my left when attending the Conference at Lancaster House, that during the last term the limitations on the Ministers were theoretical rather than real, and that neither this Governor nor his predecessor had ever attempted to impose his wishes upon his Ministers. Well, now that the limitation has disappeared, both theoretical and real, Government does not have to be afraid to tell us something about the Cuban deal with respect to timber. It is that it has fallen through? I do not know, and I would like my darkness to be enlightened by the Members of the Government, because it is a most important question. For if the rosy pictures which were painted when the Premier returned from his haphazard, accidental and unintended visit to Cuba were real, it would mean that not only would we be exploiting our timber resources to a further point but also we would be providing employment for the increasing number of unemployed.

On this point, Mr. Speaker, I am quite serious about the omission on the part of the Government, to raise our hopes and then to forget about the whole question. No doubt we shall hear from the acting Premier as to what has happened to this—is it a package deal? I do not know.

The Hon. Member for Werk-en-rust (Mr. Carter) has already made reference to the statement that "*There will continue to be room in British Guiana for private investors.*" It is not that we object to there being room for private investor. It is not, on the other hand that we say that private enterprise must be allowed to run riot, because there are still some prehistoric survivors who believe that British Guiana can only be developed by free and unrestricted private enterprise, a prehistoric animal which does not exist even in the United States. It is not that we say there should not be room for private investors, but we certainly would like to have heard more on this question, and it is certainly unsatisfactory to grace us only with this sentence:

*"Some industries will be organized privately, some cooperatively, some publicly and some by a combination of these methods."*

and then:

*"There will continue to be room in British Guiana for private investors."*

as a sort of afterthought.

This is supposed to be a socialist Government with a socialist objective, but in the whole of this Statement there is not a positive asseveration that the Government will be the final authority both for economic and industrial development. I heard a bleat to say that it is understood, but one must recognize in the context of the country, that you cannot leave everything to be understood. You must make it pellucidly clear, and the Speech from the Throne is not a document which should be replete with ellipses. You must make it clear what you plan and what you propose. No doubt what is understood will be clarified, I hope, to the satisfaction of this House.

There is a sketchy reference to Tourism:

*"The Government recognizes that the development of tourism can be a valuable adjunct to trade and industry and a comprehensive programme will be embarked upon. Special attention will be paid to internal tourism."*

So beautiful!

When I was a boy at school I remember once being told by my History Master that you can only judge of the future from the past. Well, looking at the very immediate past on this question of tourism I note that in 1960 the paltry sum of \$45,000 was allocated on the Development Programme to this subject, and out of that paltry sum only \$10,000 was expended. I understand there ought to have been an appointment which was at the last moment stopped, and nothing was done. It is in this context that I say that this sketchy statement on Tourism means nothing. The Premier must have been writing then, and said *"Oh yes, let me pen a few lines about Tourism because I have to hand the Governor this Speech by tomorrow morning."*

It is all right to talk about a *"comprehensive programme"* when Government failed to do anything last year. It is said that it would be a very valuable adjunct to trade and industry, but what sort of comprehensive programme do you plan to undertake? How does it tie in with the question of an international airport? What do you propose to do about hotels, whether of the log-cabin type or conventional? What are your definite proposals? We do not expect you to itemize your proposals, but we certainly expect something more definite and substantial than the vague statement that *"a comprehensive programme will embarked upon."*

There has already been a remark that this Speech of the Premier, which was uttered by the Governor, has shown signs of hasty preparation. I do not want to labour the point unduly. I hope we will be blessed in the very near future with further details with respect to tourism which is a source of

income; which is a means whereby new ideas can come into the country – this country could do with some new ideas. I wish also that, if and when there is this comprehensive programme, proper steps will be taken to see that tourism does not make of this country a mere playground for millionaires with their prejudices, and that tourism in Guiana will also mean an opportunity given to the ordinary people here to see various parts of the country at special, cheap rates.

When we come to consider Interior Development, we want to compliment the Government upon adopting a PNC proposal. I wish that the Hon. Member for Essequibo Islands, Mr. Bhagwan, will get the courage to stand on his feet when he wants to speak – not remain in his seat. As I was saying, I want to compliment the Government upon adopting or borrowing from the PNC proposal with respect to Interior Development and the setting up of holiday camps in the Interior. I further hope that the people will not merely be thrown there without the necessary communications and so on. I do not remember hearing anything about these things, but I shall give them an opportunity to make good, as I hope some of the younger breed will.

I am particularly concerned about the sort of slant and notice taken with regard to Mining laws. We are told:

*“The Mining Laws of the country will be revised to take account of modern mining practices and modern developments in other countries ...”*

What are these modern developments? What are these modern mining practices? The Hon. Attorney-General, I think, is *au fait* with the Mining Laws as also is the Hon. Member of Werk-en-Rust. I think the former knows more about it, or has a better idea of what is the philosophy behind the revision of the Mining Laws. It is not good enough for the Government to tell us:

*“The Mining Laws of the country will be revised to take account of modern mining practices and modern developments in other countries...”*

A more definite statement to the effect that the Mining Laws will be revised to ensure that Guianese own their mineral wealth, I would have expected. I observe the words:

*“Everything possible will be done to complete a thorough geological exploration of the country and to secure the wisest development of its mineral assets, particularly by ensuring that no large areas are held exclusively by any one enterprise...”*

The Governor in Council when granting exclusive permissions or leases on which terms the people are compelled to give evidence of certain work

or development in order to retain leases, this is nothing new. We want to make sure, for instance, that land which has mineral wealth cannot be privately owned. That is a maxim. That is what has been done in Africa for some time, so some Hon. Members need not get uneasy. We want to make sure that there is a proper royalty paid by those who exploit the mineral wealth of this country.

We want a clear statement from Government on the question of creating incentives to people with mining undertakings. For myself I cannot say what tax concessions to companies for mining *simpliciter* should be made or can be justified, because they are dealing with a wasting asset. But this Government itself seems to be unclear on what it wants. A concession has been given to the Manganese Company who are just taking out manganese. If it is a question of processing, then one can appreciate that there is justification for granting tax concessions. Most people abroad laugh at this Government when they hear that in British Guiana a few people take away the mineral wealth of this country and get tax concessions and exemptions merely for mining and not processing. I am sure if the Hon. Premier had consulted the Hon. Attorney-General he would have inserted a paragraph or two on this subject.

And now the bugbear—Communications and Roads. I recall that in November, 1959, we had an undertaking from the then Minister of Communications and Works, now Minister of Works and Hydraulics, that in the Development Programme though there was no proposal to reconstruct the East Coast Road, but rather there was a plan to construct the Interior road to Brazil, yet the East Coast Road could have been kept in good condition. I am not unaware of the obligations with the I.C.A. and Grupo Del Conte; I am not going to comment on anything that is *sub judice*; what is forgiven of children is not forgiven of men. I am not unaware of these technical difficulties, but certainly what assurance can we have that this Government means what it says when it writes and has the Governor utter with trembling lips:

*“Considerable progress has been made with the rehabilitation of the East Coast Road between Georgetown and Enmore and work will vigorously continue until the whole road to Rosignol is in good order.”*

It was a similar undertaking which given to this House in November, 1959. Every infant, not a schoolboy, knows that the condition of the East Coast Road subsequent to November, 1959, is the worst that we have seen in the lives of most of us. Only those who have lived long enough to have known it as a carriage track has known it in worse condition.

Our experience with this Government so far has been such that we are not sure what is going to happen. It is no sense being annoyed or peeved. It is no sense attempting to lecture us in the running of Parties. The Governor says:

*“Steady progress with the permanent improvement of the Bartica/Potaro Road has resulted in the completion of thirty miles of good motorable road.”*

I was recently there and there is only 17 miles of motorable road – they cannot even reckon miles of motorable road! They come here and delude the public that they have 30 miles of good motorable road. I cannot quote from seen or unseen documents; I am speaking of my own knowledge and not from information received. Allow them to be congratulated upon the proposals which they have made for increasing the number of ships for transportation to the various parts of Guiana, but let them be criticised for the fact that in a country of this size, where it is not possible even in the immediate future to construct a sufficiently large number of roads to give a fillip to the development of the Interior, that more emphasis has not been placed at this stage on air transport. The Governor says:

*“It is the Government’s policy to improve and expand its Civil Aviation Services so as to hasten general development and provide cheaper air transport.”*

It is not a question of providing air transport; it is a question of using air transport as an alternative for the time being to roads, so that you can transport things and people in large numbers. It is not a question of building a few more airstrips; it is a question of building airports with airstrips which can accommodate large transport planes. For instance, one finds in Surinam there is a tourist and development programme which is called *“Operation Grasshopper”*. They are building airstrips for large transport planes, because they recognize that within the immediate future roads are not possible.

So far as Monetary and Fiscal Policies are concerned, this Government stands naked. This Government is hoping to achieve a socialist objective; this Government wants to end the capitalist system under which this country has suffered for so long; this Government is the first Government which will have full authority to do as it wishes with respect to all things internal which, incidentally, includes foreign trade. This Section of the Governor’s Speech is the most important Section. This is where we should have seen the Hon. Minister of Finance in shining armour; we should have seen reflected in this Section his personality; he should have given some assistance to his Premier, but what does he write? I quote:

*“The Government proposes to examine, with expert help, the possibility of regulating the supply of money in the public interest by means of a Central Bank and appropriate fiscal measures that will, while helping to secure a more equitable distribution of income among the people of this country, provide the National Exchequer with additional funds for public welfare.”*

This is an insult to our intelligence to head this particular paragraph with the words 'Monetary and Fiscal Policies'. Where do you find Monetary and Fiscal Policies in this? The Hon. Premier need not be so anxious; he has the right to reply which, I am sure, he will enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, one would have expected, in this Section, to find some indication of the change of emphasis as far as taxation and the collection of revenues are concerned. One would have expected to find adumbrated, a means of ensuring a fair and equitable distribution of income and property. One would have expected not only a passing reference to a Central Bank but a further statement on the institutions that were going to be used for the purposes set out in the penultimate sentence. It is that the Government has not clearly thought out what are the monetary and fiscal implications of socialism? Is it that the Government has been caught flat-footed? Or is it that the Government thinks you can introduce socialism and use the same or other capitalist forms and emphases?

I recall that when the People's Progressive Party used to be the People's Progressive Party the cry – that was before it was invaded by the lesser breed – of that Party was that it was wrong, in the context of Guiana, that such a high percentage of our revenue should come from import duty; which, in fact, means that the poor man has to pay the bulk of the taxes and is responsible for the greater part of the country's revenue. In other words, those who could afford did not pay and those who could not afford had to pay. In other words, taxation was not properly distributed in this country. Could not we have had some indication of that here? Or is it that Government is not satisfied that import duties are in order? Is the Government satisfied that the poor man has to buy a shirt and pay the same tax on it as the self-styled industrialist has?

That is the thing that hurts me. Government talks of a socialist objective and when it comes for us to have the practical implications of this socialist objective it is satisfied to use the vague term of "*a Central Bank*". You do not have to be a socialist to realize there is the necessity for a Central Bank. A Central Bank is an institution which a country should have, whether it is capitalist or socialist. I have said enough on that, and I hope before the acting Premier replies that we will have some indication from the Minister of Finance – the most important Minister of the Government. He is the man appointed to set up this socialist system, and I hope the weight of his responsibility can be borne by his shoulders.

Another indication of non-socialism can be found in this Government's policy on Education. Let me remind this Government, first of all, because we were asked to quote figures by the Sir Galahad. Let us go back, not too far back in the distance of history, but to the immediate past. Education under the Development Programme in the year 1960, had a sum of \$1,086,000 allocated. At the end of 1960, less than half of that \$1,086,000 was expended by this Government. And it is in the field of education where there is less difficulty, I should imagine, than in the field of finance; and I believe that

the Minister of Education has the potential, not that the Minister of Finance has not got the potential.

I was saying that, first of all we have evidence of the Government that spent only half of its development allocation to education last year; and secondly, a Government that thinks so much of education that while the Ministries of Natural Resources etc., are represented in this House, the Ministry of Education is not represented in this, an important Chamber. I would have thought that there might be, instead of a Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics, one of the Secretaries to the Ministry of Education in this House to speak authoritatively on this question of education. It is an insult to the dominant of the two Houses to have the Ministry of Education without an official and competent spokesman. No doubt the Minister of Home Affairs may, from time to time, speak on education, but he cannot be fully informed; and it is an indication of the little importance which this Government places on education that it puts its Minister of Education in rarefied quarters – in seclusion – in the Senate, and does not even have a Parliamentary Secretary to speak on education in this House.

If this is a socialist Government, as it claims it is, and not a money-lending-shopkeeper Government what should be the object of education? That there should be extended to all who have the ability and capacity the available facilities of education in this country. But this is how the Government approaches this question: Instead of a clear bold statement of a socialist character, we get:

*“While the Government is convinced that the present emphasis in development must be placed on projects which generate income and provide new jobs, yet social development will not be neglected.”*

Some people learn nothing and they forget nothing.

There is no part of the world, now, whether it be Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union or the United States of America, that considers education a social service; but the PPP, for the last four years, had been making that mistake even when it had a different mouthpiece; witness in 1959, at Queen's College. It is my conviction and thought – I see some ex-teachers around this Table, and they know it – that Sweden since the last century taught the world that education is not a social service; and even a deficit budget to provide educational facilities to a population can be justified by the income that would be returned by the population later on. In the Soviet Union it is accepted; in the United States of America it is accepted. I am very worried, not over the interruptions, because they only serve as a foil, but I am worried that the Minister of Home Affairs is not present to wind up this debate on behalf of the Government.

Free elementary education – we have that already. Free secondary education; even if you said you do not have the money to do it immediately,

you should have shown us, clearly, that that was your plan. But when it comes to university education, these people are money-lenders:

*“At the top of the educational pyramid university education will be made available to an increasing number of Guianese by the expansion of the loan scheme and by the local provision of courses which, with the concurrence and support of University Authorities, will facilitate the obtaining of External Degrees in Arts by men and women living in British Guiana.”*

I thought that by now it had been agreed that education is a service which the Government owes to the community. I thought that by now it would have been agreed that, even if you do not have the means to award 300 scholarships for courses of higher education per annum, you clearly would have adumbrated an increase in the number of scholarships and show you are moving towards the day in the near future when university education will be free to those who can take advantage of it.

Is it not a shame that pro rata of all the Caribbean territories which share in the U.C.W.I., British Guiana has the smallest number of free places? Is it not a shame that this socialist Government should have an attitude towards university education that if you can afford to pay back you will get a loan, or if you have someone to sign as guarantor you will get a loan? This Government, even if it had not alleged that it was socialist, would be a Government that had defaulted; would be a Government that had disregarded its duties; and I am shocked and disgusted that this group of people who call themselves socialist – who made a loud hue and cry about freedom and independence – are showing such backwardness when it comes to education. From a practical point of view and ignoring all philosophies, it is necessary for all Guianese on whom you will have to rely. Running a country at an administrative level or a technical level is different from running it at a political level. Training and experience are necessary. How many a rose would blush unseen if you continue this backward policy of making available for persons training at institutions of higher education only if they can pay back the loans you have given them and then you attempt to tie them down? It does not make sense.

It is not sensible in these circumstances attempting to gild the lily and to throw a sop by telling us of the fine work you are doing at the Technical Institute. The whole philosophy of the section on Education is misguided and out of place. Let me hear anyone defend this and still say it is socialism, and point to any part of the world which you say is socialist and where the same thing is the case.

May I pause to note the very interesting observation made by my learned Friend, the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Rai, when he said that the talk of a university is idle talk. I recall that in 1958 the acting Premier, who was then Minister of Education, Mr. Benn, spoke of setting up a university in British Guiana, and I am grateful that his colleague has now told him what

I told him then – that what he was saying was idle talk. We have differences on political ideology but I do not think our intellectual judgments stray far from each other. But, speaking on behalf of the People's National Congress, I will say that one would not have expected, and did not expect in the present circumstances of population and finance in Guiana, that any Government would have undertaken the establishment of a university, but one would have expected that certain institutions of university level would have been established in this country in the very near future.

As I understand it, a university is an institution which has a large number of faculties. A university is an institution which I do not think at the moment the population of Guiana can support, but Government could have set up a University College with certain chosen facilities in which training to university level could be given, and faculties which are of particular significance in the context of Guiana. I think, for instance, that a Faculty of Agriculture is not immediately necessary because there is available quite near a University College which affords training in Agriculture, but I am thinking of Faculties of Forestry and Mining. It is not sufficient merely for the Minister of Home Affairs to castigate his colleague for his completely idle talk and to stop there. We would have expected that Government would have shown that it appreciates the difficulty in setting up a university but recognizes the feasibility of setting up certain colleges at which people can get training up to university level. But perhaps that was too much to ask.

Then we proceed according to the scheme of this Speech to a paragraph on the activities of History and Culture Week, and we hear that there is going to be *“increased financial support given to the Arts, and Cultural exchanges promoted.”* Congratulations to the Government! I wonder whether this paragraph has anything to do with the fact that there has been a change in the Ministry, because I recall that in 1959, when I suggested to the same Government that the allocation in the budget for History and Culture Week smacked of parsimony, I was roundly opposed and criticized by the then Minister of Education, now the acting Premier. Perhaps the change in the personality of the Minister is responsible for this new approach, upon which I beg to congratulate the Government most heartily?

Housing comes next, full of promises again, but let me remind this Government of what it did about housing last year. The sum of \$1,239,711 was allocated, but estimated to be spent up to the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1960, was a sum of only \$631,000. In these circumstances can Government imagine or suggest that we are wrong when we consider amusing and insincere the statement on page 12 of the Governor's Speech:

*“Government will continue to press on with housing development.”*

Government was not pressing on last year or the year before when it has not been spending the money allocated for housing, spending only half of it. But it says:

*"...investment and building companies which will be encouraged to develop..."*

The Government will continue to acquire:

*"...more land for both rural and urban housing and will also consider the financing of low and middle income housing through such projects."*

May I say that there seems to be a fallacy abroad in some quarters, that housing is entirely a social service. But in other quarters it has been accepted that it is not. First of all it can be the means of compulsory saving, and secondly, it is the means whereby new industries can be encouraged and generated, albeit, industries that may not be manufacturing but may just consist of assembling.

I do wish that the Government would recognize that an acceleration of the housing programme and the building of more houses to be made available both to the lower and middle income group will be of tremendous value to the country's economy. I would also like to observe that I agree with the Government in considering offers made by certain companies, but will the Government please understand that in these days most companies, regardless of where they come from, will expect Government guarantees so far as their mortgages are concerned. If that is not done the mortgage rates are likely to be high, and the amount of investment is likely to be less if Government gave guarantees. I would urge upon Government, however, to look upon its housing programme, not as a social service but as something which would provide direct and indirect employment. I hope that Government is prepared to spend more money in 1961 or a greater percentage of the \$1million allocated in 1961 for housing, than the percentage which it spent of the \$1¼ million allocated in 1960.

Government has mentioned an increase last year in Old Age Pension and Public Assistance. That was a bit of politicking, because we had heard every year before that the Government did not have the money, but last year Government found the money. I do not blame you; that is good politics. But what I want to say is that the interests and welfare of the more unfortunate members of our community are not to be viewed entirely from the point of view of the politician. To my mind the community and the state owe our unfortunate brothers better treatment than they get at the moment. Merely increasing by a few cents the allowances paid to old age pensioners and the recipients of public assistance is not good enough, but so far as old age pensioners are concerned I would have expected that this Government, this Party which away back in 1953 said the means test should be abolished; this Party which said that the age qualification should be reduced to 55, would have given us an assurance that it intended, during the course of the period 1961-1965, to adopt that part of its Manifesto of 1953 on which it campaigned, with respect to social security and social welfare.

This Government has been congratulated by some conservative elements in this country for becoming responsible with its assumption of office. Compliments from certain sections can be most dangerous and be indicative of the fact that you have lost your vitality and your ideology. I do not compliment Government on having become respectable since it has filled these seats, because it suddenly adopts the age-old cry of a colonial Government: *"We have no money."* A proper handling of your fiscal policy can provide the money for many of these services which you say now you cannot afford to set up, but then, of course, you will need some expert advice.

Mr. Speaker, I see no recommendation by this Government that something should be done about institutions like The Palms. I feel that something should be done to make the inmates at The Palms more comfortable. Were I a narrow-minded politician, I would have left it to *"economic dynamism"* to deal with because he represents the constituency in which The Palms is situated. But one must take a wider view, and it seems to me that it is not sufficient for a socialist Government to make a few passing remarks to the effect that—

*"A National Council for voluntary Social Services will be set up to advise the Minister for Education and Social Development."*

In a Speech from the Throne one expects to see an adumbration of Government's policy. One expects to see reflected in the statement the philosophy of the Government. What is the philosophy with respect to the old to whom we owe a debt? Absolutely nothing. They say:

*"As a further step a comprehensive investigation will be made into the whole field of social security including a national scheme for old age and invalidity."*

The investigation is to sow what are the needs in terms of figures, but what is Government's philosophy? What does it propose to do? We have no indication here; perhaps at time goes on we will be given some information regarding the matter.

Government has my support when it says that it believes in strong and independent trade unions. The Government has my full support when it says that in any industry a union which has the majority support proved by a poll should represent the workers of that industry. I want to assure the Government that, whatever it proposes to introduce the necessary legislation, it can count on 11 votes from this side, but there is many a difference between theory and practice. When one has as much eminence as the acting Premier, the acting Head of the Government – I am not worried; I have said it publicly that for every 1 head we will carry 4. We are not Ishmael or the Archbishop. I am interested in the circumstances of the head-rolling threat.

I am referring to the head-rolling referred to by the acting Premier. One hears the Hon. the acting Premier giving this House an indication of the alleged attitude of this Government with respect to trade unions. But at Bourda Green he was more revealing. I can assure him that I have no greater respect for the said individual, the President of the M.P.C.A, than he does. At least, the gentleman gave Government's Party some support in the last election. But let us forget that at the moment.

I feel that a Government Minister has no right to talk about a rolling of the head of the president of a particular trade union. A Government Minister may have his private sympathy, and he may feel that the British Guiana Sugar Workers' Union has a more militant and honest leadership. I am not going to essay an opinion on that, but a Government Minister has no right saying that the head of a trade union president will roll. That is a matter for the workers to decide. The workers can decide by causing his head to roll. The workers can decide that they are going to leave a particular union, they can decide that they are going to change the leadership of that trade union, but it definitely smacks of interference when a Government Minister and acting Premier starts talking about the rolling of a head.

A Government Minister must understand that when he speaks he is speaking on behalf of the Government. If he believes in strong and independent trade unions, it must not be the subject matter of restrictions. Let us pass legislation to prevent these yellow unions. If you care to you may retire, as you have already done, one of your legislators and put him into the field. That is permissible – I hope in the field there will be more sobriety than out of it. It is highly improper, I maintain, for the acting Premier to go into trade union politics in public, because in the final resort it is the Government that has to arbitrate. When we speak of independence of trade unions, it should be with respect to their being independent both of the employers and of the Government. They may desire to support the Government, but they should always be free to criticize the Government, if the necessity arises and they are so advised.

I should warn this Government that it has started off on the wrong foot, but one would always expect that from the acting Premier. It has started off on the wrong foot, and is now doing something undemocratic by interfering with the particular union. I know that some of us, since we have become respectable, are no longer able to agitate – especially when we were among the lesser fry some years ago.

As I was saying, I would ask the Government to act with more statesmanship, and to act with a better regard to what it is proper for a Government to do and not to do; say and not say. I need not worry with the "*Minister of Humour*". Instead of this diatribe against individuals – I do not see the necessity for taking a sledgehammer to kill a flea – I would have expected some positive statement as to the Government's preparedness to set up an institution, in cooperation with the trade union movement, for the training of trade unionists and workers. I would have expected to have found adumbrated a policy which was set out in legislation.

I have to look in the direction of the Hon. Attorney-General, because he is a most competent draftsman. I would have expected to see him submitting legislation to punish those rascals, those bloodsuckers who rob their workers and would put in the book \$17.00, but in the envelopes \$10.00. I would have expected that that type of legislation would have been adumbrated in the Speech by the Government. I would have expected to hear something about it in the acting Premier's speech at Bourda Green – I do not want to hear about the rolling of heads in any particular union. By legislation the Government can give the workers an opportunity to join the unions to flourish without undue interference on the part of the Government.

That statements on Health and Pure Water have already been referred to by the Hon. Member for La Penitence-Lodge, and it is not my duty or desire to repeat his observations. I should prefer to make my final observations referable to the Section dealing with the Public Service. It was, I think, about three years ago that, in the Legislative Council under the old Constitution, I introduced a Motion asking Government to adumbrate a comprehensive plan for the training of Guianese in the Civil Service for the responsibilities which would come with this new Constitution and with eventual Independence. I notice that there was only one speck on that Motion from the other side of the House and it was by the Chief Secretary. I recall that he gave a list of various individuals who had been sent on courses or scholarships, and I remember that there was no indication of a comprehensive plan with a proper perspective and things did not fall into a proper pattern. I am afraid that I still have to make the same remarks today.

Apparently the Government recognizes what I had mentioned in my Motion because I observe in the Governor's speech:

*"The Government must look to the Public Service for the successful carrying out of these plans and it does so with confidence...My Ministers are also sensible of the urgent need to expand training facilities for Guianese so as to complete Guianisation as quickly as possible."*

What attempt has Government made to increase the efficiency of the Civil Service? I concede that individuals here and there have been sent away on courses, but nothing has been said here about a comprehensive scheme of training, nothing has been said about in-service training, and not sufficient definiteness is included with respect to the remuneration of public servants.

With the Public Service as with Education in an emerging country, it is not sufficient to say that you do not have the money. It is a question of recognizing, as this document purports to recognize, that to carry out Government schemes, to run the administration, it is necessary to have qualified personnel. If there is competition between Government and other

employers for efficient personnel, it is not an answer to say that your coffers are not strong enough.

Before the suspension was taken, I was referring to the Public Service. I was saying it is no answer, if the Government, as an employer, is in competition with other employers for efficient and competent personnel, to say that money is not available for the payment of, shall we say, the market price to the staff. And, in any case, I imagine the Government appreciates that a Development Programme is dependent upon personnel. In any case, I expect the Government also to concede that now that this country has passed on to a new level with greater responsibility in every field, even more competent staff is necessary than was necessary before. And the answer given by the Hon. acting Premier was too facile to be serious or acceptable; for I believe I heard him to say that it is alleged that the Public Service is frustrated. "*Well, so are several Guianese*"; and he, I think, puts the frustration at the door of poverty and bad housing and a number of other social problems which we know exist in this country.

I am not prepared to enter an argumentation with him on that; but this I will observe: that the frustration which exists in the Public Service of Guiana is not paralleled in either Jamaica or Trinidad as far as the Public Service is concerned, and I am speaking, specifically, of the Public Service.

[**Mr. Ram Karran:** Barbados.]

**Mr. Burnham:** I have not had the advantage of comparing the *esprit de corps* of our Public Service with that of Barbados so I am not in a position to offer any assistance to the Minister Works and Hydraulics.

For the improvement of the Public Service in our country, two things are necessary, I submit. The first is a proper comprehensive scheme for the training of persons who are already in the Public Service, giving them an opportunity, by experience and training, to develop their potential abilities and be able to undertake greater responsibility. That system of training, I think, should be complemented by a conscious effort on the part of Government to recruit young men and women who have just left school – recruit them in the cadetship scheme and offer them a course of training in particular branches, whether it be merely administrative or technical, where their services are needed. I believe that there are some persons at the University College of the West Indies and other institutions of higher learning in other parts of the world who can be encouraged to specialize for the particular purposes. I feel that this Government should be in constant touch with the U.C.W.I., which it subsidizes, for the recruitment of such persons. The first prerequisite, may I repeat, is the training of persons in the Service, the training of persons who are likely to be in the Service and the recruitment of persons who are already trained – first preference to be given, in all circumstances, to Guianese.

The second prerequisite, I think, for an efficient Service – and God knows we need an efficient Public Service, now, more than ever before – is proper remuneration paid in keeping with what is offered by other employers. If we were to neglect these two complementary prerequisites we would find that, in the end, it would be necessary to import persons. We would find that, having gained our political freedom, we would still be served by foreigners and expatriates, from Governor down. And an important thing for emerging countries is not merely that they should have absolute political control over their respective territories but, also, that they should have, at the very earliest stage possible, maximum and absolute control of the Administration. It is a sacrifice with which this country is confronted. With a shortage of personnel of the necessary calibre and ability and with competition from other sources, we have to pay better salaries to the Public Servants. Perhaps, there will come a time when the competition will not be so great. Perhaps, there will come a time when, as a result of the example set by the Government and the inspiration given by the Government, would-be entrants to the Public Service would have such a high sense of patriotism that they would be prepared to make a tremendous sacrifice so far as the stipend is concerned.

There are many Members of the Majority Party – Ministers of the Government and other persons – who have left the Civil Service because of the miserly stipend given. And I am not suggesting that such persons are less patriotic than Members of the PPP Government but that they must have a sense of responsibility and realize that unless something positive is done in respect of the Public Service; until the advantages of employment and salaries are made attractive; unless by positive action civil servants are led to believe they are an integral and important part of the community, our civil servants will be frustrated and, as a result, our Administration will suffer.

Government has not really offered an explanation of the fact that last year the Development Programme of \$24.67 million was under-spent to the tune of \$8.8 million; but I am sure that one of the contributory factors was the absence of the personnel to carry out the Programme. It is easy to speak of wanting \$358,000,000 or \$500,000,000 but, in the final analysis, the absorptive capacity of the country is, to a large extent, dependent upon the quality and number of your personnel. I think, therefore, that any Government at this stage of our development, must take serious consideration of the poor material now in the Civil Service, the frustration which is the rule rather than the exception and the dissatisfaction which exists among members of the Public Service, otherwise, the socialist or capitalist or best laid schemes are bound to fail; and in these circumstances it is not the Government that will suffer but the country.

I have noted with some interest and, shall I say, pleasure, that the time-worn abuse of the Public Service as a stooge or an instrument of the imperialist power has not appeared in this document or in any statement

made from that side of the Table. Perhaps, they sensed that in the final analysis the members of the Public Service are Guianese and can be expected to meet the situation. But I hope that that appreciation will go further and Government will realize the necessity of making it better. In socialist countries, where there is a particular type of personnel, the remuneration and terms of employment are made attractive because these persons are needed. It makes no sense bearing a grudge. It makes no sense applying any dogma or rule of thumb that this group of workers is better fed. One has got to face the realities of the situation; for the supply is such that you have to offer attractive terms until such time as you can do better.

I have attempted to consider some aspects of the Governor's Speech, not in as great detail as perhaps I would have liked, because I really do not want to trespass upon the tolerance of the House, and I have pointed out what to my mind are some of the weaknesses, but I think that the adumbration or the sketch of policy is to be criticised not only for what is penned in the Speech but for what has been excluded from the Speech, whether deliberately or otherwise. It is a most significant omission not to have mentioned a single word about the Amerindians and Amerindian development.

I recall, as a Member of the past legislature, being a member of the Constitutional Committee of the Legislative Council, when it was unanimously agreed that there should be a subject – Amerindian Affairs. Fears were then expressed by the then Member of North West District that in our fast progress towards full internal self-government and Independence the interests, the rights and the wishes of the Amerindians might be neglected, and it was unanimously agreed, therefore, that there should be a subject, Amerindian Affairs, if not a Minister for Amerindian Affairs. Is it not passing strange, therefore, that since the inclusion of this subject is contemporaneous with the constitutional advance, that it was not present in the mind of the Government and made a subject in the Governor's history-making Speech? Government cannot plead forgetfulness. Like Caesar's wife, it must be above suspicion, and it cannot seek refuge in the foibles that are allowed ordinary humanity.

Why was there no mention of what Government proposes to do about the Amerindians? Why was there no mention of the active interest in the solicitude for the first inhabitants of this country? Is it part of what has gone before, that in 1960, out of a provision of \$24.67 million for development, only \$280,800 was allocated for Amerindian development? Is it part of the pattern which we see exemplified in the fact that of that small sum of \$280,800 for Amerindian development it was proposed to spend only \$43,000 – just over one seventh, up to the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1960? It is all right to come here and in pious phrases bemoaning the lot of the Amerindians who have been exploited by some of the most ruthless of exploiters in this country, some of them who string up Amerindians, who hang them high, and burn their houses? It is easy to throw stones; it is a

very simple operation, but on the other hand Government has shown such an utter disregard for the Amerindians that it has not thought it fit even to allude to them in this Speech which has been described as history-making. It seems to me that even the allocation of \$247,000 in the Development Programme for Amerindian development is sufficiently miserly. It seems to me that a great deal of money has to be spent if the Amerindians are to be made first-class citizens.

I do not join with the Hon. Member for the North West who thanks Government for this and that little favour. That is the mentality of a colonial. The Amerindians are entitled to better treatment; they are entitled to have industries in their part of the country; they are entitled to a better system of education which should be the same as that enjoyed in the urban and coastal areas. They are entitled to training in the trades. Is it not a shame that after 150 off years of British rule, benign rule, we have been told that British Guiana has not yet produced an Amerindian doctor or engineer? We can only boast of producing Amerindian priests and policemen. The connection between the two should be obvious to anyone, and I would have expected the socialist Government to have adumbrated and set out in its policy, a clear statement of what it proposed to do with the Amerindians, and how it is proposed to make them first-class citizens in this beloved Guiana. The omission in the Speech I hope will be repaired by a statement in the reply to this debate.

But that is not only significant omission. The next omission which comes to my mind establishes the proposition that this Government has not shown imagination and full appreciation of the new context in which it is operating.

There has been a lack of imagination in the preparation of this Policy Statement of the Government, and a failure to appreciate that it is operating in new surroundings and a novel environment. There is talk of Independence. We are told by the Hon. Member for Central Corentyne, Mr. Bowman, that there is no difference of opinion between the British Government and the People's Progressive Party as to Independence. I am happy to hear that, and it will make our struggle for Independence a little easier, perhaps.

But an independent country has to have a diplomatic service. At least that is something which should have been put in this document – the plan Government has for training persons. That would show that it appreciates where it is going, and what are the tools and machinery it will find necessary. I know that the Government already has one who is well qualified to represent this country at the United Nations Organisation, but a representative at the UN is not the only diplomatic representative we will need. We will need staff, and in fact what I would call a diplomatic council service. Where is the hint of that or the suggestion that the Government has appreciated the necessity for that, and in circumstances where Government is saying "*We want Independence now*"? I have not taken an

oath and therefore I am under no compulsion to answer any questions. Even if there had been a slight reference to it would have shown that Government is mindful of its duty to prepare every phase of the country's life for this impending Independence.

As part of our rapid progress towards Independence there is another subject which should have been considered and alluded to, and that is our relations with foreign countries. What do we propose should be the line or attitude of our Government in the world of foreign politics?

[**Mr. Speaker:** Isn't that a reserved subject for the Governor?]

**Mr. Burnham:** Governor or no Governor, we are told that the People's Progressive Party is a fighting Party with a fighting Leader. Governor, or no Governor, Mr. Speaker, I submit that it would have been in order for this Government to have given some indication of what are its intentions when it is in full control of foreign affairs with respect to relations with countries outside of Guiana.

[**Interruption**]

**Mr. Burnham:** It is unfortunate that, according to the Standing Orders, Parliamentary Secretaries cannot speak twice, but when they are raised to the high estate of Ministers they will have an opportunity to speak twice on motions critical of the Government.

One of the things one also expects to find in a Speech of this kind is an indication of the legislative programme, not merely telling us that Government is going to use the husk from the rice to make paper, and that it will see to it that the rice farmer is able to retain for himself the profits and interest charges which are now either being exported from the country or going into the pockets of middlemen. Those are good things, but in all parts of the world where there is a Speech at the opening of the Legislature, some indication is given of what is going to be the legislative programme of the Government during the ensuing session, and in our circumstances that indication was most important, because it must be recalled that on the thesis of the governing Party and the Government – and I agree with that thesis, though what they want to do may not be quite the same as what I think should be done – I agree with the thesis that it is necessary for this Government to change the old scheme of things. Legislation – our laws, our whole system is a colonial one. It may be argued in reply to this particular criticism, that it is impossible to set out in minute detail all the bits of legislation it is proposed to introduce. To that answer I would say that it is not without merit, but at least the broad outlines could have been presented to us.

What about the question of the status of illegitimates? What about the question of hire-purchase, not only with respect to protecting the consumer

by “...control, of prices where it is considered desirable in the public interest, and in hire purchase and credit sale arrangements to ensure that the rights of all parties are protected”? There should have been a much broader adumbration, a much broader setting out, a much firmer setting out of what is going to be the legislative programme. For instance, we hear that the Government wishes that some industries will be run by Government, some will be run in cooperation with private enterprise, and others by private enterprise alone.

I would have expected that we would have heard what type of legislation was going to be passed to make effective, during the course of this Session, the idea of thesis that Government should operate industries. Do not be afraid so far as the 11 Members on the southernmost part of the western side – not the rump – of this horseshoe Table are concerned. We do not fear Government’s going into industries. We accept that there are certain industries which Government should undertake. That is accepted in our part of the world. Even in Switzerland we know that there are certain industries which the Government has to own.

We say that there should have been some suggestions given in connection with these things, because Government’s programme of legislation should be sketched out in advance. Maybe that is an oversight which sprung from the fact that there was not enough time. Maybe it sprung from the fact that whoever was the author or authors of this document did not appreciate that the Legislature was entitled to such things. Maybe, as in the case of having two Motions when there should have been one, there was lack of experience. I shall not be too caustic with them; I shall merely warn them that if they want to be a proper Government these are things which are necessary –

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Burnham:** – more necessary than giggling.

We can go on and refer *ad nauseam* to the various things which one expects to find in this document but for which one looks in vain. To sum up, this Policy, as set out in the Governor’s Gracious Speech, is too sketchy to obtain support or acceptance – too nebulous to be recommended. There is not a golden thread linking up the things in this document. It seems as if someone had arisen from a nightmare or an unpleasant dream and had put together various points that occurred to him during the course of that unpleasant dream or nightmare.

This Policy, I submit, is not acceptable because there is not cohesion or coherence about it. In the circumstances of Guiana at the moment, it does not represent a sufficiently clear and clean break with the past. In the circumstances of our country it does not represent the handiwork of competence, but it bears the hallmark of inefficiency. I agree, of course, that we all have to make an onslaught on poverty. I agree that we have to

tackle the enormous problem of unemployment. It is not sufficient for us to console ourselves, as apparently the Hon. acting Premier would have us do, by reminding ourselves that in highly-industrialized places like Canada, there is still unemployment.

It is not sufficient for us to pat ourselves on the shoulder and be happy about the fact that in Jamaica there is a higher unemployment incidence – higher or just as high. It is not sufficient for us to do that. Let us look at places like Surinam where unemployment is down to 7 percent and the people are still complaining. Let us remember that when we refer to unemployment in the United States of America they get worried when it reaches 6 percent. Let us remember that it calls for tremendous energy, education and efficiency, to really do something for the economy and the people of Guiana.

Let us understand that it is not good enough for a socialist – if what I mean by a socialist Government is the same as what others think – it may be a chameleon word. Let us understand that it is not enough for a socialist Government to console itself by saying: *“The poor you have always with you.”* That is an argument by the capitalist. Let us understand that any Government that comes into office, at this time of the country’s history, must undertake, not only in words but in deeds, to rid this country once and for all of the scourge of poverty and unemployment; to ensure that the wealth of this country is increased, and that this increased wealth is shared by the populace or the majority and not by a few wealthy people. I do not see in this Gracious Speech by the Government indications of possible success by this Government in tackling the tremendous problems that lie ahead of us. Therefore, much as I would have liked, out of courtesy, to have voted in favour of this Motion accepting Government’s policy as embodied in this Speech, I am unable to do so.

## Independence for British Guiana: 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1961

**Mr. Burnham:** I recall that it was sometime in June—I believe the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, 1958, that a Motion which dealt with this question was introduced by the then Hon. Member, whom I then described as "*the Hon. Member for the time being*", for Georgetown South who, unfortunately, is no longer with us. And I recall, too, that I observed, then, that there were some Motions which did not permit of the narrowness and pettiness of Party differences. What I thought in June, 1958 I think, tonight in November, 1961.

As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, this is an important Motion, not only because of the fact that it seeks to call upon the British Government to grant Independence during the year 1962. It has been obvious, from the various contributions, that the representatives of over 83 percent of the electorate of this country favour Independence for Guiana within the year 1962. In view of the fact that such an overwhelming percentage of the adult population of this country favours Independence, I do not really think that Independence is an issue. There is no need for the newly arrived of political babes to quote *ad lib* the glories of freedom and Independence. In fact, when I heard my young but Hon. Friend, the Member for Essequibo Island, speak of the embarrassment which he felt when he went abroad, I said to myself: "*Youth, you have now begun to experience the indignities which I have experienced for many years*".

I have known the embarrassment of carrying a passport which ensures my passage from country to country at the request, not of my Government and my country, but of the Sovereign of what even in law is a foreign country. I, too, have been embarrassed by being described as a British subject when I see other people being described as citizens of independent countries. I have even felt a certain embarrassment at the fact, when attending certain international conferences, of having even to make my toast with something like "*cheerio*" when everybody has his own language and toast. Some say *prost*, and what have you; but we have to say "*cheers*" or "*cheerio*".

I have known what it is not to have a national flag. I have experienced this when some of my more sensitive friends have asked me: "*What exactly does it mean to be a colonial?*" It is only those who are hangers-on of the colonial lords who get the jackal's pickings when the lords get the lion's share, who feel otherwise. Only those in whose minds slavery is embedded can possibly feel that independence and freedom are not the inalienable rights of a people. For those, I have the utmost sympathy, unlike, perhaps, the Members of the Majority Party. I prefer to say: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" And since they are represented in such minuscule numbers in this Chamber, I do not see why so much wrath should be expended on them.

In our schools we are unfortunately taught English poetry, not Guianese poetry; we are taught English literature, not Guianese literature. The English author, Edward Gibbon, in the eighteenth century, remarked that Independence is the first of this earth's gifts. An English poet, whose name I must concede I never knew, said this:

“Breathes there a man with soul so dead  
Who never to himself hath said  
This is my own, my native land.”

And, consequently, I do not think that the Members of the Government or the back-benchers of the Majority Party should feel that they have to labour the proposition that Guiana should be granted Independence in the year 1962.

May I, for a moment, digress further to observe this? The Hon. the Minister - I am not quite sure, he used to be the Minister of Communications and Works; what is he now?

[**Hon. Members:** Minister of Works and Hydraulics.]

**Mr. Burnham:** - He seems to have a penchant for consistency. Therefore let me remind him of something. I remember when the Legislative Council, in 1959, was resolved into a Constitutional Committee, we heard Members of the Majority Party say that they wanted Independence immediately; but when one pursues the Report of that Constitutional Committee, one observes that the cry for immediate Independence was hedged in a willingness to leave with Her Majesty's Government an important share—the control of foreign affairs and defence. In my mind, Independence is absolute. And what, in fact, appeared to be their desire at that time was full internal self-government. Though one has got to appear to be revolutionary and to step ahead of the others. Perfectly good politics! I do not quarrel with them, but now in 1961—I merely observe this *en passant*—that they are saying: “Fix a date in 1962” —those who were saying in 1959 and 1960: “We want Independence now”.

Perhaps, the Hon. the Premier—and I belatedly desire to welcome him back to our fair country—whose representations of our country I hope will inure to our country's benefit will, in his reply, say why the Party which was always shouting: “Independence now” has suddenly decided: “We want Independence in 1962; we want a date fixed in 1962.” But whatever may be his explanation, on the principle of Independence he is supported by those who speak for 41 percent of the electorate as against his 42.7 percent. In the circumstance let me say here and now that this Amendment about a referendum is totally unacceptable to the People's National Congress for whom I can still speak, though I understand the official organ of a rump Political Party falsely prophesies my inability to speak for the Party

after this weekend. It is a case of *que sera, sera*. Let me assure them that this is unacceptable. But before the granting of the Constitution, at the Conference at Lancaster House, it was the Leader of the People's Progressive Party who said: "*Let us have a referendum; let us have a plebiscite*". It was he who said so; and he cannot really deny it. I quote from the Premier's opening remarks at that Conference: "*Let us have a referendum to decide whether Guiana, as a nation, wants Independence or not*".

We cannot really criticize the United Force for its plagiarism, but he cannot rest assured that 83 percent of the electorate has already spoken in favour of Independence for Guiana in 1962. It seems to me that the question to be considered more carefully is not so much whether we shall have Independence in 1962, because it was also agreed at the London Conference in March, 1960, that when a Motion was passed by both Houses of the Legislature there would be discussions on the question of Independence, (I shall say more on that particular phase latter) and that those discussions should start within the year when it was decided that the West Indies Federation should achieve Independence.

It is important to note, — and I remember it very clearly when others could not see the point, and I think the Speaker remembers — that the question of Independence for Guiana within the year of 1961 was dependent upon the decision that the West Indies Federation should be independent, and not dependent upon the achievement of Independence by the Federation, and since the decision that the West Indies Federation should be independent has already been made, it stands to reason that Independence for Guiana in 1962 is a foregone conclusion. What date is fixed for Independence for the West Indies Federation is not material. The fact is that a decision was made, and our achievement of Independence was dependent upon a decision and not upon the achievement. So that is the end of the matter.

I recall that some of those who spoke on the other side thought that too much time was spent on what those on this side of the Table consider to be the important matters with respect to Independence. I cannot understand their logic or appreciate their reasoning, because if they had taken the trouble, instead of making long speeches on matters on which we on this side are already convinced, to see the facts as they are, they would have recognized that what is immediately at issue — and in issue in fact — is what type of Constitution an Independent Guiana will have.

May I briefly observe that this referendum nonsense is a blind. What do those who talk about a referendum mean? Are you going to ask the Guianese people if they are willing to accept Independence which Britain is going to give us? There are some people who believe that Britain is giving it out of the largeness of her heart. Others believe she has been forced to give it. I conform to the latter view, but whichever motive you think lies behind Britain's readiness to give it, there is the objective fact, that I cannot see her in the circumstances of the second half of the twentieth century attempting to stand as a block in the way of the aspirations of the people of Guiana to be independent.

What really is bothering those who talk about referendum glibly but vainly, is that they fear certain things in which they believe will go. I am not discussing whether those things which they would like to continue are good and bad. That is not relevant at this point of my remarks. They fear that certain positions which they have occupied in the past will vanish into the limbo of forgotten things, but let us understand this, that the way to preserve what you think, rightly or wrongly, is worthy of preservation, is not, like the twentieth century Uncle Tom, to ask "*Dear master, save me. Dear Britain, please do not grant Independence because all the things I have stood for, all the great services I have given you, dear Britain, will have been in vain.*" That is not the attitude of the slave who is afraid to face the world of freedom. Such slaves are unworthy of emancipation. If they have fears—and let me wipe the smiles off some of the faces over there—we all have fears. If fears they have, the proper course to take is to fight it out here in Guiana and not seek the assistance of some outside master. It is a mental slave who needs an emancipator, but the slave who thirsts after freedom will free himself.

They must fight it out here in Guiana; they must see to it that there are certain safeguards. They must be able to convince the representatives of 83 percent of the electorate that what they seek to preserve ought to be preserved, and if I may borrow the picture first painted I understand, by the Hon. Member for Houston, Mr. Henry, I would say, let them not hide their hatchets but sharpen them for the fight that is to take place on the shores of Guiana, and not in far-off England.

I understand that the Hon. Member for North West, Mr. Campbell, is convinced that his electorate does not want Independence. I do not represent the constituency of the North West nor, unfortunately, does any Member of the Party to which I belong represent that constituency. I cannot question his interpretation of the wishes and desires of his people and his electorate, but this I will say, that democracy consists of rule by the majority, in the wishes of the majority taking precedence over the wishes of the minority. The fact is that 83 percent of the population feels that we should have Independence and be no longer proud of referring to this country as the only British possession on the mainland of South America.

But, as I observed before, the Majority Party seems to have missed the point of the contributions by the Hon. Members of the southernmost side of the western side of the House. Since we are agreed, Britain cannot say "*No.*" Even if we are not agreed Britain has already given an undertaking. What then must we consider? We must consider what type of Constitution we are going to have. We must broadcast, we must indicate what we think should be the type of Constitution, and since the Government does not have the honour of having won an overall majority of the popular votes, at least expediency should teach and instruct the Government that the views of those who speak for 41 percent of the electorate are not to be idly passed over or discarded.

Democracy is a word that is bandied hither and thither. Salazar no doubt thinks he is democrat. Khrushchev thinks he is the archangel of democracy. Kennedy no doubt feels that he is the President of the only democracy in the world. But we are not interested in what Kennedy, Khrushchev or Salazar thinks. We are interested in what we think will help this country and preserve certain freedoms, some of which we have never known, some of which we hope under Independence we will enjoy for the first time, and these latter, in addition to the former, we insist that under an independent State we must always enjoy.

It is easy for the Hon. Member for Essequibo Islands, Mr. Bhagwan, to recite certain articles of the Constitutional Instruments; it is easy for us to hear him read the marginal notes to Part 1 which refers to fundamental right under the Constitution, and to tell us: *"Look here, don't you see that it was an our Motion and with our unanimous support that these particular provisions were written into the present Constitution?"*

As a layman no doubt he was really convinced that the value of Part 1 of the Constitution is as great as similar provisions in the Constitution of an independent country. But may I pause a moment to instruct him. The provisions of Part 1 in this Constitution in legal theory we cannot change, and therefore, they mean something. Similar provisions in the Constitution of an independent country would be liable to change by the Legislature of the particular country. It is in that context that we must consider these declarations that are the fundamental rights. It is a concomitant of independence that a Gracious Queen in Council can change, alter or add to the Constitution.

[**Mr. Rai:** There is no need for that.]

**Mr. Burnham:** There is no need for that, I am informed by my most Hon. and learned Friend, the Minister of Home Affairs.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, my aural acuity is greater than yours, if I may say so with the greatest respect. It is no sense coming to this House and saying that since we have it in the Constitution it is there.

[**Mr. Mann:** That happens all over the world.]

**Mr. Burnham:** I am now going to lectured by a self-styled historian on the intricacies of constitutional law! We on this side will insist that these provisions should be written in the Constitution, the whole of which or the relevant parts of which cannot be changed without a certain majority on a referendum.

I am aware of the fact that such Constitutions exist in many South American territories. But, Mr. Speaker, if a Government is going to attempt to go outside its competence; if Government is going to be in breach of the Constitution, then the situation becomes, shall I put it mildly, fluid.

Perhaps, as the Hon. Member for Houston would say, that would be the time to bring out the hatchets which, I can assure him, our Party does not propose to hide. Until they are ready for use, we shall sharpen them. We are not hiding them because we do not want our hatches to rust unburnished rather than shining in use.

The next question that immediately arises is this: why has there been all this emphasis upon the necessity for safeguards? Why has there been all this emphasis from the PNC? Why is there the necessity for a Constitution in which certain fundamental rights are declared and which is incapable of amendment save on at least a 66 2/3 percent vote on a referendum? I hope my analogy will be pardoned. I hope it will not be considered in bad taste, but in such manner as to give an objective impression of being a *demimonde*, can she afterwards blame the third party, the public, for assuming she is a *demimonde*?

I say categorically that such have been the actions and conduct of the Party which now is in the majority here—the overall majority of seats with a minority of votes! There is justified fear that their concept of the type of Constitution they wish for the inevitable independence is at variance with the concept held by us on this side. As while we wish for Independence, we feel that these serious differences as to the type of Constitution should be voiced and the guarantees we need should be put into the Constitution.

I believe that it was on the 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1958, that the Hon. Nominated Member, Mr. R.B. Gajraj, was speaking on a Resolution not in this House, but in the Legislative Council. That Hon. Gentleman of proved political experience remarked that he had certain grave fears. For instance, I think he referred to what was happening or what was alleged to have been happening to the Muslims in China. I remember that Member in the latter part of the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup> June—I have refreshed my memory from the *Hansard*—seconded the Amendment to the Amendment moved by the then Hon. Member for Georgetown Central, and in his opening remarks said that never before had he heard such a vitriolic attack upon the Hon. Member as that made by the then Minister of Community Development and Education upon the then Nominated Member, Mr. R.B. Gajraj. So it seems that the fears which the People's National Congress now express have not been expressed for the first time, and have not been expressed only by the PNC but by others whose support on Independence is now a byword. Those persons may now have been persuaded, as I have been led to believe in publications of a certain Wazir. Those persons may now feel that the time has come when the lion will not devour the lamb that lies in its den. Perhaps, we may be forgiven if we contend that the lion's claws have not been plucked, his teeth extracted, nor his carnivorous tendencies removed.

We say that we want certain safeguards. On what do we base our fears? It may be tedious. May I remark that at the moment there is one point—

[Interruption]

**Mr. Burnham:** —*Les petites choses*—one of the little things that seem to brand the Majority Party as being not intellectually and mentally democratic in outlook is this, and it is something that has occurred over the past day or two. The Hon. Premier got up yesterday and said something about people talking nonsense and wasting time. I may very well want to apply a similar description to the remarks that came from the other side. I think it is irrelevant to tell us what happens in Argentina because it is politically independent, and what happens there is not relevant to this country.

So many quotations and facts have been listened to in this House! An attempt was made to show what could happen to a politically independent country which does not have a Government that is interested in the common man. It is not relevant to what we think of independence. In my more youthful days I would have described that as nonsense, but, it is my Hon. Friend's right to think it is relevant, in spite of the fact that I think it is irrelevant and otiose. It is of the essence of democracy that one must listen and let other people put forward their points of view, if only to permit them to get rid of steam.

If the Majority Party, in a debate like this, is going to show much intolerance, are not our fears justified? It is true that the remarks as to what was nonsense was not directed to this side of the Opposition; but for god or ill, 16 percent of the electorate in a democratic country is entitled to be heard, if only to be ignored.

I would like to go through a catalogue of events, a catalogue of utterances and a catalogue of attitudes to show why we require safeguards—such stringent safeguards as 66 2/3 percent vote on a referendum for amendments to certain sections of the Constitution.

Were this matter not so vital I would have said: if by oratory the Majority Party can convince us that there is a plausible or reasonable explanation or interpretation for or to be put in on these various facts, we would withdraw our requests for safeguards; but this is so vital a matter that mere verbal assurances are not enough. And if they are to attempt to explain these away, this explanation will fall on deaf ears. The only explanation that would be accepted is that safeguards be written in and written in such a fashion that they mean something, so that vital changes cannot be brought about by mere majorities in the Legislature of the day.

In March 1960, there was a Constitutional Conference in the United Kingdom at Lancaster House, at which Conference there were present three Ministers of the Government of the day who are Ministers today, one of them now the Hon. Premier. Also present were the Hon. Gajraj, the Hon. Member for New Amsterdam, Mr. Kendall, myself and others including the Hon. Mr. Davis. The question of the Judiciary came to be discussed and decided on—and I believe all those who were there present will remember clearly, and a thousand denials will not interfere with the accuracy of my memory—the Hon. Minister of Trade and Industry as he then was, (the

Premier) said that he would like to have Judges of the same political persuasion as the Government of the day.

If fundamental rights are to be written in a Constitution, it follows as of right the day that any legislation which, in the opinion of any body or person, amounts to an amendment without the formality prescribed that amendment can be questioned by that person or by that body in a Court. If the Government of the day insists on what it considers its rights to appoint Judiciary not so much for the learning of its members; not so much for the impartiality of its members—that, as I can see it, would be a black mark—but for its political persuasion. If these particular individuals on the Judiciary, who are, incidentally, members of the legal profession, hold the political persuasion as that held by the Government of the day, are not we appealing, in the circumstances, *de Caesare ad Caesarem* (from Caesar to Caesar)?

[**Mr. Rai:** It happens in America.]

**Mr. Burnham:** It happens in America, I am told, but I am also told that lynching happens in America. I am not interested in what happens in America. I am interested in what strikes me as good or bad for this country; and you cannot tolerate a Judiciary which is not politically independent in structure and status, in theory and in fact. There may be no objection to a Judge being appointed who had previously adhered to the political policy of the Party of the day, but as a Judge his impartiality and independence much be assured. I am sorry that the Hon. the Attorney-General is not here because I am sure that he would have agreed with me that if we are to maintain a stable society, there must be a politically impartial Judiciary, and that appointments to or removals from the Judiciary should not be dependent upon the colour of the man's politics. We must maintain not only a politically independent Judiciary, but also a legal profession of integrity and a legal profession that recognizes that one of its paramount duties is the preservation of the safeguards which will have been enshrined in the Constitution. It is not reasonable for us to ask. If that is the attitude of the Leader of the Government—

[**The Premier:** May I ask the Hon. Member to produce the Minutes about what he has just said?]

**Mr. Burnham:** In the first place, the Hon. the Premier would have the right to reply. In the second place, the Minutes are confidential.

In the third place, everyone knows that everything that is said at a meeting is not necessarily recorded. Minutes are records of what happens and has been decided. But I recall clearly—and Hon. Members cannot truthfully deny it—that it was the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs who kicked the Hon. the Premier's foot when he made the statement, and I

smiled and said to Mr. Kendall: "*Here, again, is Jagan saying what he should not say and Rai had to kick him again.*"

Since we are in lighter vein, I remember telling a client of mine, who was very upset by the untruths being told by a witness, that to lie is a democratic right and that democratic right I will grant to the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs. I say that, but to be serious for a moment I do not make this statement lightly. That is my clear recollection.

Of course, if there is a contrary recollection that contrary recollection will be brought to the attention of the House which can be judge as to which recollection is correct. I cannot be judge; I am but a witness who depends upon his hitherto impeccable recollection. Subsequent to the Conference at Lancaster House there was a Conference to which I have already alluded in the absence of the Premier, but I believe that these things must be said in the presence of the persons concerned, because I always believe that an accusation should be made in the presence of the person accused, who should be given an opportunity to exculpate himself. There was a second Inter-American Conference for Democracy and Freedom at a town called Maracai in Venezuela.

I recall that in the Colonial Committee of this Conference there was a Motion moved by one whom I would describe as the most disgusting person at the Conference. He made himself thoroughly disliked by all those attending the Conference. The fact is that the newly independent and soon to be independent countries should see to it that they enshrine in their Constitutions certain democratic freedoms, like freedom of speech, freedom of worship, free elections, freedom of the press, freedom of the radio, but there were significantly missing from his list two freedoms—freedom to work and freedom to enjoy the things a country produces. The Primer was one of the persons who spoke and voted against that Motion. Now the personality of the person moving the Motion is, to my mind, entirely immaterial. However disgusting he may have been, the point is, do you agree with the things set out there?

There were certain reasons advanced, some of which were re-advanced at a previous sitting of the House by the Minister of Labour, Health and Housing, Mr. Chandisingh, and may be re-advanced some time during the course of this debate, but no amount of sophistry can, to my mind, explain speaking and voting against such a Motion. I sometimes think people who talk about freedom are hypocritical. The point really is: do you or do you not agree with these principles? It does not matter whether the same question is raised at another Commission—do you or do you not agree with those principles—and in those circumstances can we be blamed if we feel that on that side of the House there is a willingness to do away with what are called the democratic freedoms?

Let me say here and now that, to my mind, the formal freedoms of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of worship, etc. are insufficient in the context of Guiana. There are many other freedoms of which we have been

robbed. Our economic system is such that we on this side of the House will not be satisfied merely with the formal democratic freedoms. We want something much more substantial, something that really will give social democracy as distinct from political democracy, because in the context of Guiana today the freedom to speak and not to speak in the *Chronicle*, the freedom to worship, the freedom to speak on the radio, if you can afford it—these terms are combined with the freedom to starve and to be discriminated against. But there is no doubt about it that we hold dear those freedoms which are called the formal democratic freedoms, not along with but in conjunction with others, and if the Leaders of the Majority Party have given us good reason to believe that they will not always be the archangels of those freedoms, that is why we want safeguards.

We come now to something more recent but still has passed into history, and it is of significance. We have the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources, Mr. Benn, recently the acting Premier, who has made two significant statements which he has not denied. One is about the rolling of heads, and the second about the removal of a certain trade unionist.

Now, let us start from the second. Let me say here clearly and unequivocally my opinion of this particular gentleman—I will not dilate, because he is not here to answer and it would be unfair to him. The acting Premier and others have already spoken about this gentleman, but the principle involved is that a Government should not actively, positively, directly and deliberately seek to have the head of a particular trade union, with which it does not agree, roll. It was not the Government that caused Tello's head to roll. It was a Political Party using its influence amongst trade unions that caused the renegade's head to roll.

Government cannot possibly take part in these things. Maybe a Political Party, it has influence in the trade unions, can set out ensuring that, but a Government of Ministers as such cannot publicly and officially enter into the field of trade unionism and decide for the workers and trade unionists who is a good leader and who is not a good leader. The independence of a trade union movement is an article of faith, and it is for the trade unions either on their own or by virtue of their votes to remove undesirable leaders, it is not for the Government to take part.

If the Government is allowed to get away with this direct intrusion; if the trade unions may be independent of employers, they will not be independent of the Government which is the criterion of the usefulness of the movement. It may turn out to be a question of whether or not the leader of the trade union or whether or not the leader of the trade union is politically and/or ideologically at one with the Government of the day, a thesis which we on this side cannot accept. In fact it is only the dialects that cause the Majority Party in the Government not to recognise the validity of this argument, because when they were trade unionists they were against reactionary Governments. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for gander.

Then we go to the rolling of heads. Apart from the vulgarity of the expression there is something ominous about it. Let me say very clearly, since we are not burying our hatchets but are sharpening them, we have no fear as to the ability of our hatchets to take more heads than those heads which will have rolled as a result of any action on the part of the Government to which the acting Premier belongs. But we do unnecessarily want this rolling of heads? What about those who have not got heads? What about those who may have heads but may not be sufficiently able-bodied to use them?

The aim of democracy is not merely that the wishes of the majority should take precedence, but also that there should be respect for the minority so long as it respects the fact that the majority will must be carried. Therefore it is not sufficient for us to say that we are capable of defending ourselves either in this forum, or in another forum or in another fields, but it is for us to see that some of the more unfortunate and less equipped are not subjected to unreasonable dictatorship by what at this time may call itself the Majority Government. As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, this House would be drab, I suppose, without the humour of the Minister of Hydraulics whom I have described as the "*Minister of Humour*".

There is another aspect which we must face clearly and stop being like ostriches with our heads buried in the sand. Let us face the fact that certain tensions are prevailing in our community today. I have heard Guianese abroad and Guianese in Guiana saying that there is no racial tension in our country. That is not the attitude which can in any way ease or remove the tensions. We have to face them and recognize them. There is not a single Guianese who can truthfully say that these tensions do not exist. At the present moment I am not going to elaborate or give my opinion as to who may or may not be responsible for them. What is material is the fact of their existence.

A young Hon. Member told us that it was the Romans who first thought of imperialism. We are told that, imperialists always divide and rule but they are out of Pakistan and India. What has happened over the question of Kashmir? These two countries are still at each other's throats. Responsible people in Pakistan say that there is discrimination against the Muslims in India and the imperialists are gone, so it is sort of facile rule of thumb answer to say that divisions and tensions are always the result of imperialism. Some of these tensions which exist in this country are not due to the machinations of the imperialists. That is always used as an easy answer, but we agree that to many a problem there are two answers; to every shilling there are two sides and an edge.

What do we find in Guiana today? You may call them stooges—a word which is not properly banned—but they represent certain thoughts, reactions and must have feelings.

I heard the other night at a certain meeting at Bourda Green that a certain Party was saying that the Indians at the last Election voted PPP, the Africans voted PNC, but it did not say for whom the Portuguese voted. I would like to say that they voted for the UF.

## Independence for British Guiana (cont.): 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1961

**Mr. Burnham:** When the adjournment was taken at 10 p.m. yesterday, I had begun to address some remarks on the racial tensions which prevail in this country, and the existence of which is germane to the type of Constitution which our country should have, not after but when it attains Independence during 1962.

Recalling that it had been said, at a certain political meeting that the Indians as a group, voted for the PPP, and the Africans as a group voted for the PNC; but this keen analysis of how the racial groups voted neglected to say that as a group, the Portuguese voted for the United Force. Of course this is hardly a point which we should try to decide—whether it is imperialism that is responsible for the existence of these tensions, or whether imperialism is responsible for the exacerbation of these tensions. Decidedly, we have to appreciate as a fact that these tensions exist and recognize the impact which they have had and the fears which exist as a consequence. Nevertheless in this context, I submit it is both useful and relevant to consider what, if anything, by way of legislation or administrative action, the present Government, which is the successor of itself, has done to ease these tensions or allay the consequential fears.

Effortlessly I recall that shortly after his return to this country, after the Mission on which he has just so elaborately reported, the Hon. the Premier is alleged to have stated that there has been discrimination against Hindus and Muslims in the educational field. Yes, I would say that there is some justification for that observation, so far as some denominationally-controlled schools are concerned. Luckily it is not for me venture into the field of dual control. I shall voice my opinion when the substantive Bill or Motion comes up with the question. Volubly as the Hon. the Premier saw fit to allude to this alleged discrimination, there are yet other people who, with equal conviction and an equal amount of evidence, can and do allege discriminate against other ethnic groups or religions in this country. Even so, it appears to me that this Government—this Majority Party—which speaks so feelingly of the Guianese nation has, itself, been responsible directly or indirectly for a large part of the tensions and a number of incidents of discrimination.

So it is, perhaps, apposite to see how the mind of the leader of the Majority Party works by reference to a book which he wrote in 1953-54, when he referred to the fact that African policemen were used to shoot down Indian workers. It is also a fact that it was immaterial whether the workers were African or Indians. The fact that the Police Force was at that time an instrument of oppression puts the machinery in the hands of a colonial Government. It is a fact, and then in a multi-racial country like Guiana it does nothing to change the social pattern, it does nothing to produce harmony

if in that context the emphasis is on the ethnic origin of the policemen rather than on the fact that they are policemen in the service of a colonial power.

For instance, in India, before Independence, there were policemen just as brutal, and as far as I understand, recollect and have read, they did not come from any particular tribe, any particular group, and the mere accident of there being a preponderance of Africans at that time in the Police Force certainly does not illustrate the point of one race being necessarily used against another, and can only result in a further embittering of feeling.

Even if we were inclined to forgive and forget what the Premier at that time thought was a neat illustration of the thesis that a colonial power uses one ethnic group against another to perpetuate its dastardly rule, we cannot be forgetful of the now famous document presented by the Premier to the United Nations during last year who said in this House that he did no on behalf of his Party and not on behalf of his Government. The official organ of the People's Progressive Party, of which had been laid before the highest political forum in the world. The public has not had the advantage of being given a copy of that document which was presented on behalf of the "*crying masses of Guiana*" by the Premier, liberator of our country, but by one means of another that document has come to light and is now public property.

It is necessary on these occasions to forget the inane boldness practised in that context, because this subject which we are debating is a matter of life and death – the type of Constitution we are going to have. It is better for us to bear the wound, it is better for us to expose the sores than to go around fooling ourselves and the world that this is a Garden of Eden. I wish to refer to a copy of the petition to the United Nations as it appeared in the *Sunday Graphic* of the 8<sup>th</sup> January, 1961. The *New Nation* did not carry the entire text of that scurrilous document. For the information of those who would like to know why I do not quote from *New Nation*, I will repeat that it did not carry the full text of that scurrilous document. May I observe before I refer to the original text as contained in the *Sunday Graphic*, that what was published in that newspaper and also in the *Chronicle*, and, I believe, also in the *Sun*, has never been contradicted, or amendments sought to be made. Therefore, I think it is reasonable for me and for other persons to assume that what appears in those newspapers purporting to be the full text was in fact the full text. In this document, it we pass over the part about –

*"At this moment when the General Assembly of the United Nations is going into the details of colonial matters and discussion colonial administration ..."*

and the introductory paragraph in which it is alleged that the Guianese have been denied, "*the right to immediate political independence.*" I have no quarrel with that. It was the ornate decision of the Party that it wanted

immediate Independence, though now in 1961 it is asking for it in 1962. The cognateness of the language is immaterial. The complaint that we were refused immediate Independence is correct. Comment on that is a matter of opinion. But what is most significant is that this document proceeds to deal with the social and economic history of this country. It starts with this:

*“It is of great significance in considering the question of colonialism, to observe that of all the countries of South America, the most backward or undeveloped or under-developed in many respects are the three Guianas...”*

That is a matter of opinion with which we have no quarrel. It goes on:

*“The only parts of the continent ruled by European powers (Britain, France and Holland).”*

We agree that there are only three European powers. The next paragraph states:

*“After the British settlers came to Guiana they soon felt the need of cheap labour on the sugar plantations. They first turned their attention to the Portuguese and brought them from Madeira around 1850. Having proved themselves unsuitable as sugar workers, the Portuguese left the sugar estates. Later they became shopkeepers and spirit dealers. Many Portuguese, now men of wealth, ally themselves with the ruling white community, but secretly entertain feelings of frustration because they are not completely accepted by that group”*

That is followed by a short account of the introduction of Chinese here as indentured Labourers on the sugar plantation, and then we find that there is passing reference to the abolition of slavery, and freed Africans quitting the plantations, taking to the villages where they established farms. Then we have the East Indian immigration to Guiana. Now this is what a responsible Party says in the context of a country like Guiana:

*“Today Africans constitute the largest single racial group in the City of Georgetown and the town of New Amsterdam.”*

Absolutely correct, but it goes on to say:

*“Numerically, they are the majority in the civil service, and many of them practise the leading professions. In these urban areas they also constitute the bulk of the wage-labour workers.”*

Then we hear about the East Indians coming here and the poor wages for which they worked, but the general treatment here is such as to give the impression that the African group monopolizes the Civil Service and the

leading professions. No doubt, whoever is the author of this document is not a member of my profession, has not been to any of the public hospitals in this country, or else he would have recognized that there is no racial monopoly in the learned profession nor in the other professions.

A document of this type which emphasizes the contribution of one ethnic group to the economic progress of this country in the production of sugar, to the exclusion of the contribution made by other groups—contributions just as important, and I say perhaps even more important, especially by the African slaves – is a document which clearly shows bias. But the most important part of the document is the fact that an important paragraph reads as follows –

After referring to the poor wages paid on the sugar plantations – and I agree that the wages are inadequate and poor – this is what we find in the document:

*“These wages are so low that women and children often have to labour in the canefields to supplement the meagre earnings of the heads of their families.”*

Unfortunately, when this document came to the public the Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr. Jagan, as he then was, was out of the colony, and his weekly press conference was then taken by his colleague, the then Minister of Community Development and Education, Mr. Rai, and the latter gentleman, answering to a question, admitted that there existed to the knowledge of his Government no child labour in this country, and that there was no such problem in Guiana. Here is a contradiction. The Leader of the Government goes to the United Nations, and so as to emphasize a particular hardship on only one ethnic group in this community, alleges that there is child labour on the sugar plantations, but his colleague, the Minister of Education, says his Government has no knowledge of child labour on the sugar plantations. Remember that they are both Members of the same Government; remember also that there is joint responsibility; remember also that the question was answered at the Saturday morning Press Conference at which questions are addressed to the Government, and that the information available to any Ministry would be available to any Minister taking the conference.

It is in that context that we must see these contradictions. To my mind it has a great significance. I say that this statement has been made for a specific purpose. Let me say that no writer on the social and economic history of Guiana; no student of social and economic history of Guiana can for one moment deny the contribution which has been made to this country in every respect by the Indian community, but anyone who is impartial must remark at the emphasis in this document on the part played by only one section of the community.

I do not care whether I am accused, but I think it is time we forget who are over cocktails our friends, and who are our learned friends at the bar

because these things, small as they are indeed, may become explosive eventually. Is the statement true, *sotto voce*, says a certain Hon. Member across the Table? But the Hon. B. S. Rai has already said that the statement is not true, so it is not for me to take any cognisance as to what the new Parliamentary Secretary says his Minister has said.

If one is to present information on behalf of the peoples of Guiana as distinct from one ethnic group and take all the circumstances of this country, at least one should show the truth. In this country of Guiana the hard facts of suffering and exploitation are true not of one ethnic group but that the weight falls on all. Why attempt to give the outside world the impression that one group predominates in the Civil Service and in the professions? Every group, in spite of what is written, knows the history of Indians in Guiana. If one looks into the Civil Service one will find that 90 percent of the staff at our hospital are of a certain ethnic group, if one looks at the legal profession one will find that 60 percent are of a certain ethnic group. About 60 percent of the local businessmen are Indians, and I think that every true Guianese admires them. Let us put things in their right perspective when painting the picture of things in this country.

There is reference in this document—picturesque I concede, but what happens in denominationally controlled schools? I quote:

*“With the glint of silver coins, non-Guianese are induced to give up the faith of their fathers and forefathers. The Church also is the powerful ally of British imperialism in British Guiana.”*

Children learn most who wait to be instructed. I accept the assimilative capacity of my Hon. Friend the Member for Essequibo Islands, and I have never doubted it. Then we find this section:

*“The Editor of Bookers’ News is allowed to be the Chairman of the People’s National Congress...”*

That is absolutely true. The Editor of *Bookers’ News* is the Chairman of the PNC. But look at what is being suggested; look at the turn of mind and attitude. If the Editor of *Bookers’ News* were a director or shareholder, then, there may have been some point, but the Editor of *Bookers’ News* is an employee. In other words, what the PPP wants is this: so far as any Party other than its own is concerned—it knows that it has members in certain places in *Bookers* and in high places too. If the Editor of *Bookers’ News* is an employee, what does it want? Does it want *Bookers* to say that their employees have no political freedom unless they are going to join the PPP? Of course I am not versed in these different kinds of ‘isms’. I am presumably a Guianese whose mind has not been affected by a recent trip to Eastern Europe. The document goes on to state:

*"It has also given shelter to a number of old PPP-ites whose course lost its warmth and who feel flattered."*

The only person I can think of as one of the most ardent supporters of the Premier in the old PPP where he thought he was the most powerful of the Messiahs until he was disillusioned, is not here. If an individual or individuals differ from the Majority Party's political policy, then it is wrong for Bookers or any other employer to give him or them employment. That is how I must interpret it. I thought the Hon. Member wanted to interrupt on a point of personal explanation. You will pardon my extreme courtesy, Mr. Speaker.

And when we have gone through this document which, I am sure, is a source of some embarrassment and which I hope to hear them explain away, we have a distortion of the picture. Let me say her very clearly that, so far as the evils of colonialism are concerned, we are *ad idem* with them. So far as there is a political, racial, slant—an apologist for this document said that Dr. Jagan did not prepare it, but he merely presented it. It is just as bad as a counsel who says his pleadings are not his. A Leader who presents a document like this must take responsibility for it, and no amount of shouting will exculpate him. They try to tell people that they must get rid of racialism, but racialism can be found throughout this document.

Now compare this document with the 1956 Congress Paper which was not published by the Party, but which the *Chronicle*, in its usual thieving manner, got a copy of. Put this document alongside the Congress paper by the Premier and Leader of the PPP of 1956. There is a purported analysis of the political, social and economic situation in Guiana. There is, of course, some mention of Indian landlords who sooner or later will have to be liquidated. There is also some talk about the Shakespearian personalities of some of the richer Indians who, as businessmen, are inclined to be progressive as landlords and reactionary in part in the network of the imperialist stooges.

I am quoting from a document; I am not describing anybody as a stooge. Then there is an analysis of the attitudes of the various political leaders at the time. There is a reason and an explanation for the backwardness of every Indian leader. I think the Hon. Premier has had at his side other leaders here—not Indians.

In certain societies these things go on but in sections. Let us assume that things were incidental on the part of others, but look at the two documents to which I have referred. The objective impression which one gets is the important thing. In this world it does not matter whether you are a thief or not; it is important whether you are thought to be a thief. It is important, and, as a lawyer, for the edification and instruction of my youthful colleagues, I will say that it is important whether the jury thinks you are a thief; it is important whether the judge thinks you are a liar, not whether you are a liar.

In that famous 1956 document also we find that we are informed by the Hon. Premier, a dialectician, that 100 percent of the Indian community feels itself nationally oppressed. Now it is passing strange that one ethnic group in a country which consists of other ethnic groups, the leaders of which country talk about a common nationality, should be represented by one of the leaders of the country, and sympathetically so, as feeling nationally oppressed in the context of a nation.

Now, those are certain bits of documentary evidence; now I have tendered, earlier, oral evidence; now I have tendered documentary evidence. Then let us see whether, in this context and in this country, there are people who fear. I am not, at this stage, going to go into any further questions except to say: let us consider whether there are people who agree that the PPP is the party that is primarily interested in furthering the interests of one ethnic group. There is nothing shameful about exposing the facts about fear. It is all right to behave like ostriches, but one of these days these ostriches are going to have their heads baked in the sand and they will not be able to bring them up.

We had an incident during the life of the previous Legislature, which has been referred to already, on the West Coast of Berbice between the Hopetown Land Cooperative Society and certain supporters of the PPP from Bath Settlement, and in the pleading on that case there were affidavits by persons to the effect that the second depth of Pln. Catherina's Lust and Onderneeming which should, ordinarily, have been granted to the owners or occupiers of the first depth, had been promised by the then Minister of Trade and Industry and the two consecutive Ministers of Natural Resources to these people from Bath Settlement, and I remember that counsel for those people from Hopetown were coming to see the Minister on the morning of the case but, eventually, justice triumphed. I hope that the cause of justice in this country will always triumph.

Then, we have had the incident of Ithaca. It is only when I raised a storm with the Minister of Natural Resources that the second depth to the first depth of the land of Ithaca was not taken and given to the supporters of the Majority Party.

Today, there is a complaint, which I had passed on to the Ministry, and I hope that that complaint will be investigated with the same expedition with which the first complaint of the parents of children at Non Pareil Government School is being investigated, from the non-PPP, non-Indian settlers in the Black Bush Polder that they are not being given the facilities of the mechanized harvester. That is the complaint. It is not necessary for me to go into every act or alleged act of discrimination to make my point. I think what I have said already is enough. The fact, therefore, remains that there are grave racial tensions at the moment. And it is my further submission that the PPP – I am not unmindful of the physiographies of the Ministers across there; that is politics – as a Government, has not taken sufficient steps to show that it is impartial; to show that it is interested in

Guiana and to see that its underlings and subordinates – in some cases to concede that those above are not the actual perpetrators, but in the context of a country like this and in the presence of these tensions which admittedly exist one has to be super careful so as to allay all fears – carry out its strict orders.

There are other tensions and fears which exist. Until the governing Party shows, clearly and unequivocally, that it has succeeded in removing these fears and welding the various communities in this country into one nation, we have got to take cognizance of these facts; and those groups which have fears – fears which are not baseless – have got to be satisfied that, under the constitution of an independent country, there will be no possibility of their being discrimination against. No amount of philosophizing is going to get you out of this vortex; no amount of clichés is going to change the picture.

It is a fact that a large body of Muslims in India, apparently, cannot live in union, politically, as Hindus. Apparently in Nigeria tribes in the main Federation want a more desirable form of political union than those in the unitary states. Until such time as we can remove these facts, there have to be guarantees for all groups, or else there is bound to be uneasiness. And these guarantees must not be guarantees of lip-service or guarantees that can be changed by a simple Motion of the Legislature, but guarantees, the whole or part of which can be changed at least by a 66 2/3 majority of the electorate of this country. Those are guarantees which are people of Guiana will understand and concede. All those guarantees by the Majority Party will only be proof of their *bona fides*. If they refuse to give these guarantees in the form we have suggested, must not their *bona fides* be changed to *mala fides*? Because if you want to do these things let there be freedom and an absence of discrimination against any group. Let there, also, be freedom of political associations and no attempt to remove your political opponents by administrative action rather than by the persuasion of the electorate. If you understand these things –. In any case, you are 42 percent, and we are 41 percent. You are the majority – the Government – and that is what the PPP must understand. Because of one of the freaks which so frequently occur in the first-past-the-post system, 42 percent has yielded 20, and 41 percent has yielded 11; but when it comes to Independence and the guarantees, the feeling of the 41 percent must be obvious even to the greatest dullard. You cannot even ride rough shod, if you believe in democracy, over the 16 percent. Because it is democracy, the freedom of the minority must be respected, and not only respected but protected.

I know there has been some criticism of the stand which the People's National Congress took on the question of Independence and its relation to federation. With that, I shall deal shortly, but will you permit me to say and explain that so far as the People's National Congress is concerned, we feel and we pledge ourselves to respect the rights of every group. We demand the right which the majority has to govern, but we also insist that the majority should recognize that the rights of the minority are not to be violated so

long as the minority respects the rights of the majority. Democracy is a question of mental attitude. So many people who allegedly championed the cause of democracy when they were the underdogs have discovered all sorts of reasons and excuses for imposing a tyrannical rule when they had been raised to the status of power. But let us warn you from here that the People's National Congress holds itself free to take whatever action it is advised, whatever action it advises itself to take if these safeguards, having been enshrined in the constitution in the way we say they should be enshrined, are dishonoured. Let me take a rest while a Motion is moved.

I will now deal with the criticism which was made of the stand of the People's National Congress so far as Independence and Federation are concerned. The People's National Congress had felt that in proper circumstances British Guiana should join the West Indies Federation, provided the terms were satisfactory to Guiana and the Guianese people, because we felt that there were several economic advantages to be gained from being part of a larger political unit. Let us say clearly that facts have proved that at the moment it is neither advisable nor wise for British Guiana to think of acceding to the West Indies Federation. There is no question about that, and so far as we are concerned we are big enough and large enough to admit that subsequent circumstances have intervened, that the future as we saw it then, some time ago, is not the present as exists, and it is only a little man who is going to try to do an intellectual earth wheel to explain how one position is the same as the former position.

The dialectic, of course, will explain why he should oppose free speech in one context and support it in another; why he should vote against a Motion for democratic freedoms at Maracai, and in British Guiana get on the housetops and say he believes in them. It is no use getting over there and saying "*Look what a terrible thing you did about Federation. You wanted to keep back this country.*" The contention of the People's National Congress at that time was this: that if you agree that Federation on proper terms is desirable, it would be easier for such a Federation to come about with Independence for the whole federation after the units came together at the level of full internal self-government. They sit down there and talk of what a great man, Joseph Nyere, said, but it was the same position taken by him in the case of the Eastern Federation. And we hear them saying what a wonderful fellow Nyere is, with the same sort of reasoning running through Nyere's mind.

I have been speaking for some time now not only of the Chair but of my colleagues on this side and on that side, and I do hope that the indulgence which they have shown between last night and today is an indication of what we will do after Guiana is independent. Tolerance is the duty of a majority, whether it is a minority majority or a majority. But let me say this. Reference has been made to Cyprus. If Cyprus, with a population no greater than ours, can be independent, why can't we? It is perhaps incumbent upon me to make some further reference to Cyprus. Do we in this country want

a Cyprus solution? As I see it, and as I am at present advised, a Cyprus solution in Guiana would be a calamity. If we want to avoid either the incidents of the Cypriot situation or the Cypriot solution, let us walk warily and let us reason together as to the type of Constitution we are going to have. Independence is ours. A referendum can be disregarded. No democratic concept forces upon 84 percent of the electorate the obligation of going to a referendum on the demand of 16 percent, but your regard for the peace of this country, your regard for the consensus that is necessary if there is to be economic and social progress in this country, must force upon you the recognition of this fact: that the safeguards which we demand you have got to give, or else what would be your Independence but a tinkling cymbal and sounding brass?

## **Second Reading of the Local Government (Postponement of Elections) Bill: 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1961**

**Mr. Burnham:** It seems to be obvious that it is necessary to postpone these elections, and I am really hoping that we can accept the undertaking of the Minister that this matter will be done within the first six months of the new year because I seem to recollect, with a certain amount of accuracy I am sure, an undertaking that the Greater Georgetown would have come into being and elections to the Council would have been held—and that was way back in 1958. Up to now, the Georgetown Town Council continues to be a nominated Council to which nominees are being added by the Government from time to time, and wholly unrepresentative of Georgetown as it stands at the moment. I hope, I would not say this Government but that the continuing Government would deal with the present matter with a little more speed than in the case of the Greater Georgetown. And I hope that the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs may give us some indication as to whether or not his speed would be that of the mills of the gods, so far as Georgetown is concerned.

## Government's Handling of Crisis: 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the fact that, since the Hon. Premier has informed this House that a Commission of Inquiry will be appointed to inquire into the incidents which occurred on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> February, it would not be advisable in this discussion, which the House has given me leave to initiate, to attempt to apportion any blame as to who was responsible for the incidents; for instance, who shot Superintendent McLeod and so on? I wish to assure you that if, perchance, I stray beyond the bounds of propriety, I will look to the Chair for the necessary guidance, assistance and, perhaps, control.

It was, I believe, on Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> January this year that we heard the Hon. Minister of Finance reading his Budget. Today I note with interest, though not with sympathy, that his tones were very much more subdued than his tones on Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> January. It seems to me that the crisis which arose in our dear country over the past two weeks can be, to great extent, traced to the Budget. I do not propose to go into the details and proposals of the Budget, for my latest piece of information is that these are no more and that there is another United Nations specialist here to advise on a new Budget.

But the fact that emerges is this: a large section of the population of this country, more especially the workers, found these proposals in the Budget unbearable and, in the case of the workers particularly, these proposals were interpreted as an attempt on the part of the Government to further lower their already low standards by the imposition of heavy taxation on commodities which workers have to consume.

I remember some years ago, when the Financial Secretary Mr. (as he then was) Frank McDavid presented the Budget, the Hon. the Premier used to observe that the Government at that time taxed items because they were in wide use and, because they were in wide use by the workers, those Budgets used to be anti-working-class Budgets. There are others who would like to make us believe that the Budget which was adumbrated on the 31<sup>st</sup> January was a working-class Budget, but the objective fact is that a large section of the working-class – the majority – felt that the Budget was anti-working-class. There was a great deal of opposition to it – which, of course, is the democratic right of persons who do not agree with Government's proposals.

It seems to me that the Government, for no intelligible reason, took fright and then completely mishandled the situation. There was, for instance, the debate in this House on the 9<sup>th</sup> February on the question of the appointment of a Select Committee to draft a Constitution for British Guiana. Of course, as has become normal since the Opposition days of the Premier, there was a demonstration outside the Legislature. The Premier seemed to have got

himself all mixed up, and in fact panicked apart from an allegation which he made against a leading Member of the People's National Congress. I shall not dilate on that matter because it is likely to attract the attention of another Tribunal. He alleged that there was too much rowdiness; there was an alleged assault on him and/or his car; and over the radio he alleged that threats had been made to the lives of himself and his Ministers. These allegations about threats to the lives of Ministers might have been based upon evidence. If they were based upon evidence, this Government ought not to have done as the Savage Government did in 1953 or the British Government over the same period in merely repeating the allegations. The allegations ought to have been investigated and charges laid against the people responsible.

So far as I am aware, a plot to assassinate or kill any person is still a criminal offence punishable under Chapter 10 of the Laws of British Guiana. It seems to me that the repetition of those allegations was intended to gather sympathy from some whose loyalty to and support of the Majority Party was waning. Whether that was the intention or not, and it seems to me it was, it was certainly calculated to exacerbate feelings as was the false allegation during the election campaign about violence at Mahaicony to the Hon. the Premier, as he then was not.

It is in this context that we have to view the statements and the invitation made and issued at a meeting at Windsor Forest on the Monday prior to the 9<sup>th</sup> February, when the Premier told a number of his supporters in that rural area that a big demonstration was being planned against the Government and that they should come down to Georgetown to defend their Government. Certainly, one who is Head of the Government ought to realize the impact of such an invitation and the inevitable result, that there must be increased tension and further ill-will and bad feelings between one section and another section in the community. It is my feeling, or conviction, that those were deliberate acts to excite the populace. But even if my conviction proves to be wrong, certainly the conclusion is right that it did increase tension and excite the populace.

But the most alarming act from this Government came on Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup> February. This is the Government which prides itself on being working-class; this is the Government that has taken on itself the description of "*vanguard of the proletariat*"; this is the Government whose Leader over the years has been the leader of demonstrations. I remember in 1952 that soft drinks tax demonstration, inspired and helped on by the Leader of this Government, when I was deputed by him to represent those who might have been arrested. This is the Government that has said, through the mouths of its Leaders in the past, that in this revolutionary era the Legislature is not the only forum for agitation and anti-Government activity; this is the Government, headed by the Hon. the Premier, who, in 1953, objected to the crowd's not being allowed in the Chamber, this the same Government today that on Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup>, issued a Proclamation making certain areas prohibited for the purpose of gatherings, meetings, etc.

To my mind – and, I understand, to my mind of certain of his Ministers, but since they are bound by the Official Secrets Acts, they cannot disclose whether my information is correct – that Proclamation was unnecessary and provocative. It was an attempt by a so-called working-class Government to intimidate the workers, to intimidate the people in this town and to prevent them from demonstrating and showing what they felt about various measures. If that Proclamation was not unnecessary, why is it there was no incident on Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup>, when there was a demonstration in breach of that Proclamation?

Certainly, those who thought about that Proclamation ought to have realized how stupid they looked and ought to have realized that they had brought the administration of law to its very nadir. The Proclamation was not only stupid, but also wicked. It was viewed as wicked by several thousand of persons, and members of the working-class. It disclosed that this Government was prepared to use force, to use the legislative machinery, to use delegated legislation to suppress any who dared to oppose it and vocally show their opposition to the measures of the Government.

There was, on the 11<sup>th</sup> February, a demonstration by the Unions representing the employees of Government – a peaceful demonstration, where there was great show of solidarity between the white collar workers and the manual workers; and then again on the 13<sup>th</sup> there was arranged a mass demonstration of all workers. Both of these demonstrations were extremely peaceful. There was absolutely no incident whatsoever, but yet my information is that prior, at least, to the demonstration of the 13<sup>th</sup>, if not to the demonstration of the 11<sup>th</sup>, this Government had asked His Excellence the Governor to make available British troops to preserve law and order.

Apart from the fact that it must represent the lowest depth to which this Government can sink – and it is indeed the lowest depth when those who had cried in 1952 and 1953, “*limeys go home*” are asking the same “*limeys*” to come here to preserve law and order – that request to the Governor to bring British troops here is of twofold significance. Number one, it represents an admission by this Government that either it was incapable of preserving law and order in peaceful times, or it did not have confidence in the forces of law and order at that time existing in this country. And a Government which has not got the confidence of those who must enforce the law is not a real Government.

It is all right to come out after, as a rat from a hole, and to start squeaking, but those are the facts. You have the Police Force here. You have the Volunteer Force and, in fact, in spite of the smiles from the Minister of Communications and Works –

[**Mr. Speaker:** We haven't got such a Minister in the House.]

**Mr. Burnham:** You will forgive me, Mr. Speaker, they change so frequently. It is to be observed that on Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup> this Government

had also issued a Proclamation giving certain powers to the Commanding Officer of the British Guiana Volunteer Force. So it was not *per incuriam* that they did not know of the existence of the Volunteer Force. They knew that it existed. They knew that the Police existed, but yet, these people who talk about Independence, who open their big mouths in an attempt to convince the world that they are the greatest nationalists out, fell back on the imperialist troops.

The second point of significance in that request which was made prior, I state categorically, to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of February, is that it was obviously an attempt by this Government to further intimidate those who were opposed to its measures and who, up to that time, had been showing their opposition in the usual democratic fashion. Maybe, for those of the older school, it was an unusual fashion but it is a fashion to which we have become accustomed in this country since the entry into the political field of the Hon. the Premier. It is not that I want to make heavy weather of this, but it is difficult to erase from my mind the impression that it was not a mere coincidence that the British troops arrived on the same Friday, on the same day, that the disturbance took place.

During the period prior to Friday, 16<sup>th</sup>, and after, there was a strike of Government and other workers. It seems to me that the Government showed gross incompetence and misjudged the situation at this point also. It was little pitiful to hear the Leader of the People's Progressive Party warning workers about their being in breach of the law. Obviously, that was a very thinly veiled reference to the Ordinance of 1942, an Ordinance, the provisions of which it was the main plank in the PPP platform in 1953 to have removed.

The question of the difference between its employees and the Government is one that went back some years. Certainly, we remember the famous, not last words, but just words that the Premier uttered in November, 1959, when the members of the unions affiliated to the Federation of Unions of Government Employees asked for increased wages. He said, "*Not a cent more.*" After a strike in 1959, there was an increase from \$2.52 to \$3.04, but there were several outstanding differences between those Unions and the Government which this Government took absolutely no steps to have settled. In fact, in October, 1961, there was a request made to the Government to send to Whitley Council certain differences then existing between the Unions representing Government employees and the Government, and up to the time of the strike which started on Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> February, there had been no reply from the Government to that request.

That is the situation; where Government has obviously ignored the demands of the workers and had slyly refused to enter into discussions with the representatives of the workers by means provided by the Whitley Council. Then add to that the anti-working-class Budget; add to that the threat to take stern measures, as the Hon. Premier said over the radio; add to that the unnecessary Proclamations; add to that the invitation

to foreign troops to come here “to preserve law and order” when there was no breach or no threatened breach.

I promised not to deal with the events of Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> February, which was clumsily handled, and there were provocative acts for which there could have been no justification, but as to who was responsible or was not responsible I leave it to the Commission to decide. But one thing is clear, that whoever may have been the individuals responsible for the distinct instances and events, the Government by its blundering had certainly created an atmosphere in which anything was likely to happen. Indeed I remember now the words the Premier uttered some months ago “*that there is going to be an explosion in British Guiana*”, and indeed the Government was the body that was responsible for that explosion on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> February.

Now, what do we have? We have a Proclamation of Part 11 of the Emergency Order of 1939. He who had justly complained against the declaration of Part 11 of the Emergency Order of 1939 in 1953, is now using the same instrument in the form of the Governor. What is the necessity for emergency legislation at this time? – to allow people’s privacy to be imposed upon; to allow officers to search premises without a warrant, and to allow people to be arrested without a warrant; to allow people to be detained without any proper cause being given, and to ban publications if, in the opinion of “*His Eminence the Dictator*” those publications are not conducive to law and order, or “*good order*”, as is actually stated in the enactment? It is true that the Emergency Order was invoked in the name of the Governor, but clearly the Emergency Order is the child of the Premier and his Ministers. What more disgraceful act than that could there have been? If he had all that guts why didn’t he do it before the British troops came? If he had all that gumption, if he really thought it was necessary, why didn’t he, the Premier, rely upon his Police and Volunteer Force to have the Emergency Order effective and effectual? And I must say this *en passant*, that the Police have shown, in my observation, the greatest loyalty to this present Government in spite of the unfortunate and ill-advised utterance by Mr. Kelshall at a press conference.

Why the Government could not use the Police I do not know and never will be able to understand. Why the Government had to rely upon foreign armies is past understanding. Was it because the Government knew that it had treated policemen, who are workers, very badly, and that the rice farmer, to quote the Premier in the speech at Windsor Forest in 1959, was more entitled to assistance than employees of the Government, which would include the Police? Whatever may have been the reason, it was certainly most disgraceful for a popularly elected Government to seek, first of all, to prejudice the Police, and to use foreign troops as an instrument for browbeating and intimidating.

But that is not all. Here we have another bit of clumsiness on the part of the Government. The Premier gets on the radio on the night of Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> February, and talks of “*visiting the full severity of the law on those apprehended*

or proved guilty." What utter nonsense, and how significant it is! Here we have clearly an attempt at intrusion into the judicial system by the Premier.

[Interruption]

**Mr. Burnham:** Idiots will giggle and hyenas will grin, but others like the Hon. Attorney-General and the Minister of Home Affairs will appreciate that no Member of the Executive has any right to talk about visiting upon people the full severity of the law when the Courts of Justice and people are going to be tried for offences already known to the law. That is an indication of exactly where this Government is or was intending.

Now that we have an Emergency we also have a further irritation of the situation. The Hon. Premier has threatened to introduce press censorship. That is in keeping with the Proclamation of Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> February. The Proclamation was intended to prevent demonstrations against the Government. This threat of press censorship is an attempt to silence those who are against the Government. I see absolutely no justification for any press censorship of any kind. I cannot possibly hold any brief for the daily newspapers. In fact I have as much reason, both as a man and as the Leader of a Party, to complain against the type of thing we have found in these daily newspapers over the years. In the majority of instances they are against the popular movement, and they always keep up the tradition of supporting a losing cause at every election.

But a Government that says it will visit the full severity of the law on people when there are Courts of Justice, a Government whose Leader has said he wants a Judiciary of the same political persuasion as the Governing Party, is not a Government that will stop at suppression or censoring scurrilous articles. It is a Government that will not stop until it has silenced every form of opposition. Today it is the *Daily Chronicle* (perhaps I should not say whether or not it is a good thing for this country that it should continue to exist), tomorrow it may be the *Evening Post*, the next day perhaps the *Guiana Graphic*, and then we will find the PNC's *New Nation*, and then we will go on until the only publication will be *Thunder*.

That particular pronouncement by the Premier is again not only provocative but also indicative of what he has in mind. He is the publisher, or used to be the publisher of the *Thunder* and its inaccuracies, because *Thunder* is as replete with inaccuracies as any one of the daily newspapers. It could not be a question of libel, because *Thunder* had to settle an action for libel the other day with Mr. Sugrim Singh. It is obviously an attempt to silence opposition completely in British Guiana. But whatever may be their intention they certainly will not be able to achieve it, or achieve it without a serious situation arising. For what the People's Progressive Party must understand in the first place is that the results of the last election did not show that they commanded a majority of popular support, and any attempt

by them to suppress the rights of the majority to oppose the Government by democratic means – by the press, by demonstrations, etc., – is going to be met, shall I say, very firmly.

Whither are we drifting in the circumstances? The events of Friday, the 16<sup>th</sup> February were unfortunate, but if the Premier means anything by the first part of his plea on that historic night; if he means anything by that joint plea made by the three Leaders of the three Political Parties on Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> February, the situation, at least from that stage, should have been differently handled. You do not cool tempers by threats, especially when you yourself have admitted virtually that you are incompetent to preserve law and order without your masters' soldiers. You do not encourage people to return to serenity, sobriety and calmness by declaring a State of Emergency, and by having before their very eyes every day the symbol of their subjugation and the symbol of your derogation from what you promised before, and what you have already set yourself up as.

It was the Premier who went before the United Nations Committee and said that had it not been for the armed might of Britain the people of Guiana would have declared their independence already. It is the same Premier who has these foreign soldiers on our native soil. Does he expect anyone to trust him or to believe in his *bona fides* when he declares a State of Emergency? But let him be warned. Let his Government be warned. You can arrest me if you want; you can arrest anyone if you want, but we are not going to take it either.

You (the Premier) come back from the USA and say that you believe in the democratic freedoms, but, in the first difficulty in which you find yourself, you resort to repression – and that in the context of a pauperized country. These poor people, who had to go on strike in order to make Government give them their due, will now have to pay for the upkeep of foreign troops in this country. You say you are paying them \$2.6Mn and we will agree to it. I suppose you will come back here for a few more millions to pay for the upkeep of the foreign troops you have brought into this country.

Sir, is this the attitude of a working-class Government? It seems to me that if this Government had been true to its mouthings and statements about being honest –

[**Interruption** from the Government Benches]

**Mr. Burnham:** Answer not a fool according to the multitude of his folly. As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, if this Government were interested in the working-class, it would have, in the first place, considered favourably and sympathetically the demands of the workers.

It would not have waited for a strike before it decided to give back-pay from the 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1961. It would not have waited for a strike before

sending to the Whitley Council those points of difference which existed between itself and its employees. Further, it would not have panicked at the first sign of simple opposition and agitation. If this Government continues in the way it has started since the beginning of February, this country is going to be ruined from the point of view of increased tensions, and the majority of its population will be drawn into one camp or another where the prime concern will be how to destroy each other rather than how to build the country and repair what damage was done on Friday 16<sup>th</sup>. Indeed, if the present trends and traits continue, it will mean that we shall be completely burdened with a terrific debt to the British Government for sending imperialist soldiers here.

I am opposed to the PPP, and that goes without saying. But after all I am a Guianese, and my heart must bleed when I see so much incompetence in such high places; and when I recognise that, as the history of the last few weeks has proved, this Government's policy is tending to the ruin of this country. We will not make a great noise about the Premier's saying he will not resign. It is the right of a politician to assume the air of bravado in circumstances of difficulty and fear. That is past now, but I must observe that the attitude of bravado did not express itself prior to the end of the strike. I would observe for myself and the PNC that it must take a great deal of "*brass face*" and lack of self-respect to talk about not resigning and underscoring that when he has had to withdraw the Budget on which any Government stands or falls.

Mr. Speaker, never have I heard of Government withdrawing the important phases of its Budget under pressure, and then saying to the foreign press: "*I will not resign – underscore that.*" But that is not all. It was stated in the *Thunder* that the TUC did not get much because what the TUC got on Sunday night had already been conceded on Wednesday night. That may have been so, but the concessions were as the result of the workers' demonstration. This is not the time for bravado; this is not the time for irritating people by talking or not resigning. If you do not want to resign, the people will know that you are not decent enough to do so when your Government has collapsed. This is the time for sending back the British troops and assuming the reins of Government – do not depend on an expatriate Governor to issue Part II of the Emergency Order. If you do not resign now or mend your ways, when you get your Independence you will be presiding over a graveyard.

## Committee to Consider Draft Constitution: 9<sup>th</sup> February, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** Mr. Speaker, I am in entire agreement with the Hon. the Premier when, in his introductory remarks on the Motion, he said that this is a matter of great importance, for it seems to me that it is the cornerstone, so to speak, for the constitutional edifice which we would hope to erect for an Independent Guiana. Speaking for myself and on behalf of my colleagues of the People's National Congress, I would say, Sir, that Independence is both desirable and necessary, and I may add inevitable, for there was no dispute in March, 1960, at the Conference at Lancaster House when varying shades of political opinion were represented and there was common agreement. To put it in a nutshell, *"that within a year of the present Constitution under which we are now operating, Guiana should gain its Independence, provided it had by that time been decided that the West Indies Federation should be Independent."*

In fact, it seems to me that the three Parties that offered themselves to the electorate during 1961 had foreseen and anticipated Independence within a relatively short time. It is also to be noted that the Party to which I have the honour to be the Leader was the first one to mention a date, the 31<sup>st</sup> May, which at that time was fixed as the date which the now crumbling Federation should have achieved its Independence. Consequently, when on the 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1961, the Hon. the Premier, fresh from his visit to the United States, moved a Motion calling upon the Secretary of State for the Colonies to grant Independence to Guiana during 1962, the People's National Congress, speaking through its elected representatives, supported that Motion. It was not a matter of vague principle, but a matter of conviction. There is not necessity at this stage to go into the arguments in favour of Independence. Indeed, he who has to be persuaded that a country must be Independent must suffer from a certain obscurantism or obtuseness of mind, and is not like to be persuaded by us.

But may I remind the Hon. the Premier, Mr. Speaker, through the Chair, of course, that when we of the People's National Congress gave support to that Motion, which I think every patriotic Guianese ought to have supported, we particularly made the point that, though there was no issue on the question of Independence, there would be many an issue on the question of the type of Constitution under which this country was to embark on the ship of Independence.

It would appear—and I am taking no note of the little darts that were fired by the smaller breed in criticism of our observations—that the Hon. the Premier and his Party did not take seriously our stricture and observations with respect to the type of Constitution we thought necessary in the particular circumstances of Guiana. Of course, during the course of the debate we were told from the Government Benches that the

Party, which though a minority holds the majority of seats in this House, believes in the same democratic principles about which we spoke.

It is to be recalled that we pointed out at the time that we would not be satisfied with mere lip-service to these democratic principles, and observed that we thought certain clauses should be entrenched in the Constitution and be incapable of amendment, alteration or change, save on a 66 2/3 majority of the electorate. At the time we thought, and today we still think, that there was nothing unreasonable in the proposal; for if we are of one mind as to the democratic principles which should be honoured and embodied in the Constitution, difficulty of change of the clauses embodying these principles should not be an occasion for disagreement. It is just a question of acting *ex abundant cautela* – out of abundant caution, because both sides agree, so we are told, that certain democratic principles should be embodied in certain clauses.

Shortly after that debate, however the Hon. the Premier was reported to have said – and he has not denied it, and I would submit that these are circumstances in which silence is an acceptance of the accuracy of the statement – that under no modern Constitution are to be found the safeguards which the People's National Congress asked for. I am not really interested in entering any disputations with a dentist on the question of constitutional practice and traditions, but, for purposes of the present argument, I am prepared to concede the accuracy of his statement though not admitting it. But so far as the People's National Congress is concerned, it is not a matter of what appears in modern Constitutions; it is not a matter of what we think is necessary for the protection of the freedom and the privileges of the people of Guiana.

During the course of that debate, it was pointed out, from this side of the House, that we could not be forgetful of the things like the PPP Congress Paper by its Leader. It was a classic of subversion, hypocrisy and callousness. We cannot forget various incidents including that nefarious document which was submitted to the United Nations. If, indeed, we were to forget it we would be unmindful of our duties to those who elected us; we would be forgetful of our obligation to 41 percent of the electorate.

I observe that, apparently, the Hon. the Premier did not think seriously because, with no further attempt at consulting, it was announced by him that the Constitution was to be drafted by the Attorney-General and was to be submitted to the House, I quote: "*late this year or early next year*"; translated in terms of the present – late last year or early this year. It may not be unusual or discourteous, but certainly undemocratic; for I shall, perhaps, have reason to say, again: a Constitution is not a matter for a group, especially a minority group of 42.7 percent. It is a matter for the whole country. And I do not know how long the PPP had a monopoly of Constitutional wisdom for the PPP Leader to tell us that he will have this Attorney-General prepared a draft and submit for discussion in the House.

The Hon. the Premier, during the course of his travelling towards Tanganyika, called on the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and it is reliable reported that he purported to speak on behalf of 83 percent of the electorate. He had no mandate, I know, of 41 percent. I will assume that he did have a mandate from the 42.7 percent; and my experience of recent history leaves me to believe that the remaining 16.3 percent gave him no mandate either. Then, he wandered or went on his way to the United Nations and there, I understand, he was listened to by a Committee as a humble petitioner, there again, purporting to speak on behalf of the 83 percent. The PNC did not give any permission to the PPP to speak on behalf of the 41 percent, it is a piece of temerity and impudence for anyone except the PNC to speak on behalf of the 41 percent who voted for the PNC. Whatever may be our faults or shortcomings, we have never been guilty of the inability to speak or to represent our own views. *En passant*, although the Premier had come fresh from Tanganyika, it did not appear that the Tanganyika delegation voted in favour of his petition.

Then, on the 14<sup>th</sup> January – Mr. Speaker, I crave the indulgence of this House to show the history and to explain what I shall give as the continuing attitude of the PNC – there was an announcement from Government House to the effect that the Rt. Hon. the Secretary of State for the Colonies was prepared to call an all-party Constitutional Conference in London in May, this year, to discuss arrangements and the fixing of a date for the Independence of Guiana. Then and only then did the Hon. the Premier think it necessary to consult anyone outside of the cabal which he calls his Government.

On the morning of Monday 15<sup>th</sup> he inquired after my health over the telephone. I was fresh from an accident.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Burnham:** It was the 15<sup>th</sup>, the accident was the 14<sup>th</sup>. And I was invited as, I understand, also was the Leader of the United Force to call on the Premier to discuss arrangements. Naturally, I had to consult the governing body of the Party of which I am Leader, and after consulting with the governing body I communicated with the Premier that my executive saw no purpose in such a meeting, on the basis of what he told me on the Monday morning, because it would appear –

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Burnham:** It is a fact that the Premier did tell me, at the time, about presenting some draft by the Attorney-General who, I understand, now, is described as the most brilliant Constitutional lawyer in the West Indies. My sense of legal camaraderie may prevent me from expressing disagreement with that description, but I may be forgiven for asking the

Attorney-General whether he was a Prizeman in Constitutional Law or ever presented a thesis in that field.

The PNC, through me, put up, quite clearly, a proposal that the Constitutional Conference must be preceded by the drafting of a Constitution. We were *ad idem* on that; and, further, that the draft Constitution shall be drafted by a Select Committee on which every Party was represented in proportion to its own popular votes. A Constitution is not a matter for a Government. If perchance, the Government happens to speak for the majority of the people, then the two concepts coincide. A Constitution is a matter for the people; and even if this Government had a popular majority, this is not the time to push any Constitution down the throats of the people. And to make any reference to the Constituent Assembly in India would be out of place and inaccurate. As I had to remark in my letter to the Premier, in the case of India, it was the Constituent Assembly who elected for that specific purpose to which the matter was referred, not its Legislature.

I pointed out, quite clearly, that, so far as we were concerned, a draft Constitution would have to be written in relation to Party votes. The Premier entered into an argument and said that no one quite understood the strength of the People's Progressive Party because it did not contest six of the seats. You cannot eat your cake and have it. You have to stand by the statistics of your tactics.

Since I am a man of peace and like to concede to the greatest of my opponents, I pointed out to the Premier that I would grant him, at the most, 10,000 votes for the six seats that were not contested by the PPP; and on the results of the last election, 10,000 votes are equivalent to two percent., which still leaves the PPP as a minority Government. These were the statistics. At the same time, I asked the Premier to be good enough to allow the PNC an opportunity to put forward its point of view on this most important matter of the Constitution over the radio, as it was entirely within his patronage, control and power, because it was his portfolio under which broadcasting came. The self-styled democrat replied that Government did not see that any purpose would be served by giving radio time to Political Parties; when he, unapologetically, gets on the radio and gives the PPP as distinct from Government, broadcasts. I was surprised. That is why we on this side insist on these safeguards – that they be entrenched. He will say, today, he is in favour of freedom of the radio, tomorrow when he gets power he will say "*my Government does not think it fit or no purpose would be served giving radio time to Political Parties save and except my own.*"

On Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> January, the Premier made an appeal over the radio, speaking not as the Government – I have a transcript of his speech. He talks about "*we*" and "*my Party*". To that we have no objection. The Leader of a Party should have the right to speak on behalf of his Party. That is democracy. As Leader of my Party I would know what my Party had done and what it proposes to do. It is in that context we requested radio time.

But there was further significance in that broadcast. In that broadcast, the Premier said he was prepared to submit a draft by the Attorney-General for consideration by the House and for criticism, and would make such concessions as were consonant with the basic principles of the PPP. 42.7 percent as against 57.3 percent! *"We will make such concessions as are consonant with our basic principles!"*

On the draft Constitution for the independence of British Guiana which, I understand, will affect 100 percent and not 42 percent., what did the Hon. Premier mean when he said *"The Government does not intend to force upon this country a Constitution drawn by us"* while at the same time insisting that the Constitution drafted by the Attorney-General be presented to this Assembly for ratification? – an Assembly in which 42.7 percent of the electorate is represented by 19 Members (let us say 20 for the time being), and 57.3 percent of the electorate is represented by 15 Members. That is for the simpleton to accept. We made it quite clear that that was totally unacceptable, as also the proposal that the Legislative Assembly be resolved into a Constitutional Committee.

Then we had another bit of transparent chicanery. He says *"If you do not want the whole of the Assembly, as it may be too large, let us then have 10, 6 and 2 or 5, 3 and 1."* In other words, not only is the PPP insisting on starting off on the wrong foot in presenting a draft Constitution for discussion, but they also want to ensure that in whichever Committee the draft Constitution is debated they have a predominance of votes – 42.7 percent must dictate by their votes how 57.3 percent should live.

But even more exasperating in its concept is the proposal in a letter to me of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January from the Hon. Premier. The People's National Congress was asking that not only should the Select Committee have representation, but also that the public should be given an opportunity to express their views orally or by memoranda. The Premier pretends to be making a concession, and says in his letter to me of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January that the Committee will be invited to submit memoranda by the 15<sup>th</sup> February, which would then be considered by the Attorney-General in his cloistered Chambers—not the Committee but the Attorney-General. We remember the statement of the Premier when the proposals for the present Constitution were being discussed in 1959. Said he *"I am not prepared to sit down here and listen to 'crackpots'"*, when the People's National Congress suggested that evidence should be taken from the public. His Honour the Speaker was then a Member of the Legislative Council, and I am sure that although he has changed his capacity he has not changed his memory, and would have corrected me if I were wrong.

That is why we were so insistent on the question of taking evidence from the public, because obviously all the PPP wanted to do was to sit down and write its own little Constitution, drafted by the Attorney-General, and then use its preponderant numbers in the Legislative Assembly and the Senate to have that carried out and presented to the Secretary of State for the Colonies

as the opinion of the people of Guiana. I will concede that since the 15<sup>th</sup> January the Hon. Premier has been attempting to give the impression of making concessions to the point of view of the People's National Congress. He says that those concessions are great concessions because they are contrary to what was agreed on between the People's Progressive Party and the United Force. I do not know; I was not there. But there is a conflict of evidence as to what took place at that ill-advised Conference between the Leader of the United Force and the Leader of the People's Progressive Party. But those concessions are on the surface; still 42.7 percent, according to the Premier, must dominate. But understand, the majority lies here (*pointing to the seats of the Opposition*).

The Premier, in his pre-election rally on the Corentyne, asked for a vote of 80 percent. They give him 42.7 percent. How uncharitable and uncooperative they were. I can see why he wanted 80 percent – so he could say “*I speak for the people.*” He says he speak for the masses. Which masses? Everyone knows that the PNC's support had more masses than the PPP's support. A certain PPP Member of the House admits that the PPP was supported by a lot of “*big shots*”. We are poor; we do not have “*big shots*”. So you do not speak for the masses; you do not speak for the people or for the majority, and it is nothing short of impudence to suggest that 42.7 percent should have its say against 57.3 percent – obviously advised by someone skilled. I do not know the name of the person; I do not know his country of origin; he may, for all I know, be a Guianese, either by adoption or birth. The Premier appeared to make – but only appeared – a concession.

Still, as the Hon. Premier told me, his Government is not prepared to permit a majority, a non PPP majority, on the Committee. But if the electorate did not give you a majority, it is not for you to behave like Mussolini and convert a majority –

[**Mr. Ram Karran:** Rule Britannia.]

**Mr. Burnham:** Britannia rules the waves – not this side, look lower down.

It is not for you to attempt to make that minority into a majority. Once you accept that the Constitution is a matter for the entire country, once you are going to use the representatives of the people you must reflect on that Committee the proportions in which the people voted for the respective Parties. That is our contention, and this proposal of 8, 6, 2, so that there should be equality between the PPP and the Opposition Parties, is not an acceptance of the people's will as expressed at the election. But even while the Hon. Premier was attempting to be most reasonable, making concession after concession, he always reminded me in his letters that his Government was not prepared to go further. It is not a question of the Government; it is a question of Parties. It is not the Government that has to write the Constitution. I am not interested in the Government in this context.

It is your right to govern, but it is not your right, constitutional, democratic, or else, to write the Constitution that you want. While the Hon. Premier was attempting to be the epitome of patience and concessions, here is what the Attorney-General, the draftsman of the constitution, said on Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> January, at the corner of Prince's and Russell Streets – what he is reported to have said. The Hon. the Attorney-General will have his opportunity to deny if he cares to deny, and who knows, this House may find that my allegation against him is not proved beyond reasonable doubt.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Burnham:** Said the Attorney-General, on the date and at the time and place mentioned before:

*“Even if I die tonight, the draft Constitution prepared by me as British Guiana's first political Attorney-General is the Constitution that will definitely rule this country. It is the only Constitution you will have – the only constitution Maudling will give you, whether you wish to accept or not.”*

Out of the dark recesses of the most criminal and cynical minds sometimes comes forth truth. The reason for this truthful outburst on the part of the Attorney-General on Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> January, I cannot explain. I do not know why he was so truthful and frank, but he goes on to say that since the PPP was elected at the last General Election—now a *non sequitur* follows—*“it was therefore their inalienable right to dictate the type of Constitution that should be operable in an independent British Guiana, provided it was in the best interest of all Guianese.”* Of course it is claimed that this 42.7 percent are the sole and absolute judges, the final court when it comes to deciding what is in the best interest of the people. I quote:

*“The People's Progressive Party says so, and though we can support it by reason, we will support it by authority, if necessary.”*

I think it was the Romans who had a descriptive phrase for such people – *novus homo*. The Attorney-General goes on, and I quote;

*“By virtue of our majority seats we will not have any Constitution or Select Committee where we are asked to share the number of representatives with the losers.”*

This is what the Attorney-General says. Of course his Premier, on better advice, is more suave, attempting to put the silken glove over the mailed fist, but we still see the mailed fist underneath. They want to have a Select Committee of 8-8, and in his letter to me the Premier kept on talking about the Government. The Government is not involved in this; it is the PPP, the

PNC, and the UF that are involved. This is not a matter of governing; not a matter of a Motion as a result of which there will be expenditure from the revenues, or as a result of which some administrative action will be taken. This has nothing to do with governing as a result of the results of the election. This is a matter of a group of people coming together and reasoning as to what aegis or panoply they would like to live under, after Independence, which is our inalienable right, is granted.

This Motion today is a hypocritical one in the context of the Hon. Attorney-General's remarks, and the Hon. the Attorney-General is a learned Gentleman. The Hon. the Attorney-General belongs to my profession; the Hon. the Attorney-General comes from that group of lawyers who do not lightly say things; and if the Hon. the Attorney-General, the architect of this Constitution, says that, am I to believe the Hon. the Premier, or must I believe my learned friend and legal colleague? Says the Hon. the Premier, however, *"It is not possible to have all this evidence taken, because on the last occasion we took nine months and on this occasion we are likely to take nine months."* The period is significant. We cannot have all of this time to be delivered of the Constitution with which the Hon. the Attorney-General is pregnant. So according to the Premier, let us, therefore, have a constitutional miscarriage; let us call a Committee together, presided over by the Speaker – I make no complaint about the Speaker. But this proposed Committee, Mr. Speaker, is not as in the case of the Committee set up in Jamaica to prepare proposals for a Constitution; it is a Committee which is to consider a draft.

Between the 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1961, and the 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1962, the Select Committee of the two Houses of the Jamaica Legislature were able to meet, take evidence, consider memoranda and put up proposals for a Constitution in draft form, and that Committee did not boast of having the most eminent constitutional lawyers in the West Indies. It is a camouflage to suggest that this Committee cannot, within a reasonable time, take evidence, receive memoranda, make decisions and put up draft proposals.

In any case, even if we were to concede that the length of time between February and May is too short, whose fault is it? May I borrow from Shakespeare and adapt him: The fault, Mr. Premier, is yourself and not in the stars. On the 1<sup>st</sup> November you knew where we stood not only on the principle of Independence, but on the type of Constitution. You should have begun to work from then, instead of gallivanting all over the world and bringing back no money.

In these circumstances, it is to be noted that we still think the proposals today in this Motion moved by the Hon. Premier do not embody our idea of the Committee, which should be finally responsible for the production of the draft, getting the advantage of hearing from the public. What sort of makeshift nonsense is this? Says the Hon. mover of this Motion:

*“...the public will be invited immediately to submit memoranda on their views to the Committee by the 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1962.”*

But if the views are submitted before the end of February, the Hon. the Attorney-General will look at them and note them. He, the Attorney-General, who has said that if he died on Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> January, the Constitution that he was drafting would be the Constitution under which we have to live and die, is going to note the representations from the public, not the Committee. Who will know what is received, save the Hon. Attorney-General? Who will know what he has noted, save the Hon. the Attorney-General? That is putting the cart before the horse.

You are going to present a draft on the 28<sup>th</sup> February, but memoranda may be submitted up to the 15<sup>th</sup> March! But realizing the false position in which his Party now finds itself, says the Premier, as a sort of concession: *“If you send in your memoranda before the end of February it will be noted, not considered, by the Hon. the Attorney-General.”* How can he, if he is to promulgate this, we hope, unsuspecting document by the end of the month, make any note for the purpose of affecting his draft as a result of having seen memoranda which came in on the 28<sup>th</sup> February?

This is nonsense. Where is it going to stop? Where is the line going to be drawn? Either the draft must take into account all evidence and memoranda, or it will ignore such evidence and memoranda. Do not give those who have a facility with pen and paper the opportunity of having their memoranda noted, and have those who take literally your invitation to send memoranda by the 15<sup>th</sup> left out.

The Hon. the Premier can rest assured that the People’s National Congress is dedicated to immediate Independence. He can also rest assured that the People’s National Congress is anxious, if permitted, to take part in the drafting of a Constitution, but the Members of the Party will not do that on terms dictated by the People’s Progressive Party. We repeat our proposals:

- (i) A Select Committee for the drafting of the Constitution on which each Political Party that presented itself to the electorate will be represented in proportion to the popular votes gained;
- (ii) Further, each Party will choose its own representatives and not have happen again what happened in February, 1960, where after a lot of intrigue and chicanery, the Majority Party even dictated what representation the political parties in the Opposition should have.

Each party must choose its own representatives. Then, following the practice that is usual in such circumstances, let the Committee invite evidence and memoranda. Having heard the evidence and considered the memoranda, then let it present a draft. May I remind the Hon. the Premier

that less fortunate Jamaica, whose governing Party did not boast of an eminent Constitutional lawyer as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics has done, was able to do everything between the 31<sup>st</sup> October and the 11<sup>th</sup> January. The Committee took evidence, considered memoranda, put up a draft, and then submitted the results of its deliberations in a draft Constitution.

In this context, with all due respect to my learned friend the Hon. the Attorney-General, contrary to what appeared in last week's *Thunder*, this is not a matter for the Hon. the Attorney-General *per se*; this is not a matter for the Government. He cannot be a draftsman of the Constitution by the Select Committee, unless the Select Committee commissions him for that purpose. Of course, the Select Committee would not be so obtuse as not to take advantage of his learning and legal ability in this context; but he is not serving the Committee, he is serving the Members of the PPP; they put him there and he is their servant. The People's National Congress will find its own legal brains to serve it.

Therefore let the Hon. the Premier understand, let the PPP understand, let this country understand that we are not going to be pulled into a Committee where there is no representation in proportion to the number of votes cast. When the PPP is prepared to agree to a Committee in which the Parties are represented in their true proportion and perspective, we will sit. If the PPP wants to have more representatives than the PNC, it can appoint a Committee of 100 so as to be able to take advantage of the 1 percent, but this principle we hold dear. So far as we are concerned; so far as those for whom I can speak and on whose behalf I speak here today are concerned, we will have nothing whatsoever to do with this bit of hypocrisy, cynicism and chicanery.

## Payment of Salaries to Public Servants for 1961: 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** I have noted that the Hon. the Premier had indicated his willingness to accept the \$4.00 per day minimum provided funds were available. That, to my mind, is the essence of hypocrisy. Number one, why did he have to be prodded into considering the figure of \$4.00, and number two, unless he is grossly incompetent, he ought at this stage to know whether or not the funds are available? After all, it is the Premier speaking. If the Premier and his Ministers had sat down and had allowed the other Members of the House to pass that Amendment, that recommendation, then, of course, it would have been dependent upon funds being available. But since he is the person to get up to support the \$4.00 he ought to know whether funds are available; and it strikes me that he and his Government do not intend to pay the \$4.00 because if they had that intention it would have been unnecessary to put in that rider or that condition.

This sort of attitude as displayed by the Premier in his Amendment is typical and dates right back to the very early days of his Government during the period 1957 to 1961. Indeed, the Motion proper, which we have been asked to consider, has only been made necessary now because of the dilatory tactics of the Government who ought to have foreseen, several months ago, the necessity for paying the Government employees the sums which it now proposes to pay them.

When the Government's unclassified sections went on strike in 1959, the Premier said, "*not a cent more.*" He said that at Windsor Forest which, apparently, is his happy hunting ground for making irresponsible statements like "*not a cent more*", or inviting his frightened cohorts to Georgetown to support his falling Government. In November, 1959, he stated that the poor rice farmers were more in need of increases than the Government employees. It took strikes for the offer of \$2.75 per day, and it took a prolongation of the strike to get \$3.04 per day, with an agreement for the reference of the subject to Whitley Council.

The Minister of Finance has professed – and I use the word "*professed*" advisedly – anxiety to settle this long-standing matter. If this Government were in fact in earnest or anxious to get over this long-standing dispute with its employees, this House would certainly have given it the necessary approval for the expenditure of money.

I am subject to correction, but as I understand the Budget Statement which was made on the 31<sup>st</sup> January, the Minister of Finance proposed a sum of \$2,600,000 to pay increased salaries in 1962. It means, therefore, that had it not been for the strong action taken by the Government workers during the month of February they would not have been able to get his \$2.6 million for increased salaries during 1961. Now, says the Minister of Finance,

the Government's wish is that a public servant should be a contented person. I am happy to hear that, because it was this same Government, through its Premier, who had accused civil servants of being stooges and tools of the imperialist masters. I hope that the statement by the Minister of Finance indicated a change of heart, and not merely a change of façade in the context of the present embarrassment of the Government.

Whatever this Government may say, there can be no denying that it is the greatest disgrace for any Government more especially a working-class Government, to have its workers coming out on strike over conditions of work and wages. It is no sense throwing bouquets around and exchanging compliments as to who is fascist and who is communist. It has to be admitted by anyone that this is a sorry state of things for which the Government must be blamed, when its workers go out on strike for better wages and conditions of work, and that the strike was justified from the point of view of the Government workers have proved by the fact that they did not go back in until their terms of resumption were accepted by the Premier – he who will govern, for he said *"We were elected to govern, and govern we will."*

Never before in history has an employer been forced not merely to accept all the terms the workers insisted on, but also to give the workers a holiday over the period they were out on strike. If this is not an admission of incompetence and poor handling of an industrial dispute, what on earth is? Says the Premier, *"Away back on the 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1962, I met the Staff Associations."* But he has not told us how uniformed he was when he told the teachers that their increases ranged from 10 to 13 percent, and it had to be pointed out to him that the increases proposed ranged from 5 to 8 percent. He was obviously badly advised and did not know what on earth he was talking about. Imagine the Premier, the Head of the Government, telling Staff Associations that they were getting increases ranging from 10 to 13 percent and their having to tell him they were 5 to 8 percent; and then having to say *"that is my information"*? Who gave him that information? That is one head that should roll. He was made to appear very incompetent and ill informed.

It was in October last year that a request was made by the Federation of Unions of Government Employees for reference of their dispute with the Government to the Whitley Council, but not even the courtesy of a reply to that request was sent to the Federation. Indeed, it seems to me that there is a great deal of reason, and there are several facts upon which the proposition can be based – there is a good deal of reason for the suggestion by the Hon. Member for Upper Demerara River, Mr. Jordan, that the Government's attitude towards its employees, whether classified or unclassified, was influenced by the belief on the part of the Government that those were persons who did not give the People's Progressive Party political support at the last elections.

Now, says the Premier, "*The original recommendations made by the Government are basically the same as were eventually accepted.*" I want to understand that. I really want to be taught. I should have thought that the Premier, having recovered from his recent experience, at least would have condescended to particulars and explained to the House what were the basic proposals made prior to the strike, what were the terms of resumption, and in what lay this close similarity. I do not believe him because he had not given us the details, and I have good reason to believe, from information from the trade unionists, that what he said there is totally inaccurate and untrue.

In explaining his predicament, the Premier said that we on the Opposition benches have not the foggiest idea of what are the implications and the difficulties of the situation. Indeed, the files are not at our disposal. If we do not have the foggiest idea we are following in the noble tradition of the Premier when he was the Hon. Member for Central Demerara in the old Legislative Council, between 1947 and 1953. It does not seem to me that the Premier has made out a case against the increases which ought to have been given before, and the further increase which I shall argue later ought to be given now. It is puerile to come here, quasi-economist as he is, to tell us that Berrill based his recommendations for the Development Programme on a minimum wage of \$2.52 per day. It requires a minimum of literacy to have appreciated the fact that Berrill's recommendations were on the basis of \$2.52 per day, and it requires a modicum of consistency and honesty to have rejected Berrill so far as he based his recommendations on \$2.52 per day.

I recall very clearly that on the 13<sup>th</sup> November, 1959, the Minister of Communications and Works, as he then was, now the Minister of Works and Hydraulics, Mr. Ram Karran, extended his chest measurement and said "*You cannot criticise our proposals for the Development Programme because there is nothing in them to criticise.*" It is no sense coming to us now and telling us that Berrill started on the assumption of \$2.52, therefore, we should blame Berrill. It reminds me of a certain ex-Chief Justice who used to tell the jury "*My opinion is this, but if you accept my opinion it then becomes your opinion.*" The Leaders of the Government accepted the basis of \$2.52, therefore, it became their basis. I remember a Sunday afternoon in 1954, when the Report of the Commission for the Revision of Salaries was published, that I was sitting in the house of the Premier, who was then deposed with the rest of the Government, and that he remarked "*Too little and too late*" regarding the Report which recommended a minimum wage of \$2.52 per day.

By all that is just, unless ignorance is interposed, unless dishonesty has supervened, how could this Government have accepted Berrill's proposals based on \$2.52 per day, when the present Leader of the Government in 1954 thought that \$2.52 per day was "*too little and too late*"? Liars must have good memories, and you are not going to fool anyone here by any suaveness.

Either you cannot run the Government - and the showing yesterday was such as to convince any but the fanatic that you cannot run the Government — or you are dishonest. You now tell us that in 1948, when you were asking for higher salaries and wages, the results of Dr. Giglioli's experiments in the eradication of malaria had not yet shown their full effect on our birthrate, but none but a tyro would not have realised that eventually it would be reflected on the labour market. When you were asking for better wages there were not so many mouths to feed, you say. When you are the Government I say you must pay better wages regardless of the number of mouths.

I remember when I was a colleague of the Premier that he used to make a very sound point — that the first charge on any institution or industry is the payment of proper wages and salaries to its employees. Do not come here with the capitalist approach — *“we have not got money.”* That is what the capitalist says. He will always tell you *“We have not made enough profits and, therefore, we cannot pay better wages.”* It is not for you, a socialist (alleged) to come here and tell us *“government cannot pay the workers more because we do not have the money.”*

Now, as I was saying before I rested to sip some water, let us consider this proposal of the Government that it cannot afford increases. It cannot afford increases, it says, because it cannot find money. Is it not appreciated that if it pays increases to these poor people — these members of the proletariat that it says it represents — such increases will be reflected in the spending power of the people; and it has not changed the old capitalist form of taxation — taxation by the way of customers duties — that that additional spending power will be reflected in revenue from customs and excise duties and, consequently, the increase which it will have paid the lower class of Government employees will not be as great as it had first appeared on the Estimates of Expenditure side? A part of it will be absorbed in the figures it will find in the Estimates of Revenue side.

[**Mr. Mann:** That is obvious.]

**Mr. Burnham:** I am no economist; I have no degree in economics, but I am told by an historian that what I am saying is obvious. Therefore I shall not proceed, having convinced one, I hope he will use his good offices to convince his somewhat mentally opaque brethren.

Says the Hon. Premier in his defence of an indefensible position: *“One of the things that has contributed to the difficulty in which the Government now finds itself is the flight of capital, or the export of capital from this country.”* There are two observations to be made on that, and he must not be allowed to get away with these half-truths. That statement is good for the street corner, but not for the Premier when he is speaking here as Premier. The Premier knew that the flight of capital started before August, but during the

election campaign he was lying to the public when he said that it was untrue to say that there was any flight of capital.

I apologise, Mr. Speaker, for making that statement inadvertently, first, I will say that the Hon. Premier was probably inaccurate when, during the election campaign, he said that there had been no flight of capital. He now has to admit, on further research no doubt and with a greater penchant for accuracy, that the flight of capital started before August, 1961.

Secondly, he cannot brush aside the fact that the greatest exports of capital in recent months are Members and supporters or ex-Members and ex-supporters of the PPP. It is not for us to be blamed. We, the PNC, have no capital to export; we do not even have enough capital on which to live!

[**Mr. Benn:** You looted though.]

**Mr. Burnham:** I had promised the House that I would not place any responsibility on anyone for the looting and so on. I understand it is not being suggested that we looted. But we did not have guns in our homes!

[**Laughter in the Public Gallery**]

**Mr. Burnham:** If it is a fact that the Government's inability to honour its obligation to its employees has, in some measure, been caused by the flight of capital, then I submit that it is a matter for which the Government must take full responsibility. If its own Party supporters are so scared and frightened that they want to send away their money, there must be something wrong in the country. I know of one PPP member, for instance, who banks his money in Switzerland. He said at a public meeting that Dr. Jagan would be the Premier. It means that Government has not been able to keep and preserve the loyalty of the people. I am not talking about withdrawals from the Post Office. Therefore it is for the Government to attempt to correct whatever is responsible for this flight of capital. At the moment I am not prepared to say what is responsible for the flight of capital, but it is a matter for Government to recognise what is responsible and to have it corrected. I would not suggest that it is the ideology of the Government; I would not suggest that it is the declarations of the Government; I do not or am not prepared at the moment to say what it is; but if Government is interested in British Guiana, if it is interested, first of all, in the economy of the country and its ability to recompense the workers for the work they do, Government must see to it that the fault is corrected.

The Hon. Premier told us that last year he had to borrow \$1Mn for the Development Programme this year. I do not understand figures too well – I do not understand this, and I hope the Minister of Finance will explain it to me: last year this Government proposed an expenditure of \$23Mn for

the Development Programme, but by the end of the year it used only \$21Mn according to the statement given by the Ministry of Development. The first question I want to ask is: did the Government know in December, 1960, when it was proposing to spend \$23Mn that it would not have \$23Mn? Secondly, if Government thought it would have had \$23Mn, why did it spend only \$21Mn? I should be very grateful if the Hon. Minister of Finance and his colleagues would give me some explanation. It seems to me to be high finance if you vote \$23Mn, and cannot spend it, and then to say that the money is not enough!

We are told that there must be greater sacrifices. It is easy for Government to call upon people to make sacrifices, but, before it can persuade the people to make sacrifices it must convince them (1) that it is a Government of the whole country and not a part thereof, and (2) that their welfare is its primary concern. If I may add an additional consideration, you must impress them with your own willingness to make sacrifice. It is in this context that we consider the \$200 a month entertainment allowance which is given to the Hon. Premier tax free. Let me say very clearly that, for any man who knows how to entertain, \$200 a month is a miserly sum. I do not grudge the Premier that, but I am interested in the psychological impact on the community. What is the use of telling the people about austerity and sacrifices when the Hon. Premier votes for himself the sum of \$200 a month entertainment allowance tax- free? –

[**Mr. Ram Karran:** What about the Mayor's allowance?]

**Mr. Burnham:**—Says the "*Minister of Humour*": "*what about the Mayor's allowance?*" Tax -free entertainment, for the other people, has been cut out.

I remember, when I was very much younger, there was some Governor here who decided to give up income tax exemption on his salary. I think it was Sir Gordon Guggisberg who decided to set the example. Not that it mattered much how much income tax he was going to pay, but he wanted to set an example in the circumstances of his asking Public Servants and persons employed in the Civil Service to work for less than they deserved. That is the sort of thing that makes a psychological impact upon the people – not two car allowances when you use only one car for travelling; not taking tax-free entertainment allowances and tax-free house allowances at the same time asking people to make sacrifices!

It is an example that his country needs, and it is no sense being wholly and proverbially hypocritical, saying: "*Do what I say, and not what I do.*" Set an example for the country and the people will follow it, provided the two other prerequisites are there. You must show the people that your interest in the country is your primary concern. I had thought that the Hon. Premier was of that point of view when, in his television broadcast in America sometime last year, he said that he was a socialist, but he would not permit his socialism to interfere with the development of this country.

I do not know what he meant, but I interpreted it this way: Regardless of his own personal idiosyncrasy, ideology or otherwise, he would keep foremost in his mind the welfare of the country. But, apparently, I misinterpreted what he said.

I wanted to make another remark in the context of this cry of poverty on the part of the Government – a cry which was rejected by the Hon. Member for Central Demerara in the period 1947 to 1953. Whenever the Government said it had no money the then Hon. Member for Central Demerara always criticised and castigated it for just pulling clichés out of the bag.

The Premier said yesterday that it is necessary to have the British troops here. Says the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, *“So long as law and order are to be preserved, I will see that it is preserved. Therefore the presence of the British troops here are necessary.”*

If this country is so poor that it cannot afford to pay its poor workers for whom this Government professes so much solicitude, how can it afford to pay these highly paid British troops? I have heard that it takes \$5,000 per day per warship. We had five. In the name of all that is just, if you really want to put the country on its feet; if you really want to do your duty to the workers, are you going to take the children’s bread and throw it to the *“Limey”* soldiers? That is what you are doing, and I am not really describing them as *“Limey”*. I am merely quoting. Let Britain pay for them; let Britain keep them where she wants them. But you are going to bring them here. You cannot pay people and you talk about unemployment and your solicitude for the working class.

Let us now consider some of the Government’s recommendations which we are asking to agree to, but may I assure it right away that so far as the People’s National Congress is concerned, we are going to vote for the \$2.6 million. Our only regret is that we cannot vote for more.

I do not think I would waste time on the explanation or introduction to this Sessional Paper, for all this talk about the rise in the consumer price index for urban working class families being 10 percent since 1954 but the rise in wages 12 percent and, therefore, that there is a rise in the real level of 2 percent only is nonsense. It is based on two false grounds. The first false ground is that the standard and level of wages of the workers in 1954 were such as to keep them well fed, well clothed, and well housed. If you are going to talk about the rise from 1954, you will have to prove that the 1954 level of wages was adequate. And we all know that on the basis of the Nutrition Report by Nicholson, workers in 1954 were not getting enough to feed themselves and to give themselves and families a sufficient number of calories to enjoy proper health. So for the Premier to say that there has been a rise in the level of wages by 12 percent as against only a 10 percent rise in the Cost of Living Index is to fool himself and to attempt to fool the public unless of course he can show, which he cannot show, that the level of wages in 1954 was fair and sufficient for the purpose for which wages are meant.

The second fallacy in this observation here, and I comment on it lest they believe that we swallow the pill, is that the consumer index is accurate. The first man to allege that the consumer index was inaccurate was the Hon. the Premier, but he now shows such disregard for accuracy that he is now depending on the figures from the consumer index.

How low can we sink? How much more can we try to fool the workers? They are the same people who say that the workers have been misled, the workers have been fooled but those are the people [*pointing to the Government Members*] who have fooled the workers, and what is aching and hurting them now is that the workers are now sufficiently enlightened not to accept any more fooling and sufficiently militant to take a strong stand.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Burnham:** It seems as if the Minister of Works and Hydraulics is interested in me. I may assure him that like him I have not benefited from the looting. I am sure he is very sorry about that, but I am happy for myself.

We find here, further in the introduction, with respect to primary school teachers, the suggestion that the increase is 10 percent when it has been shown to the Hon. the Premier that it is between 5 percent and 8 percent. Why does this Government persist in inaccuracies and fooling? Let me inform this Government that this interim settlement, this interim payment of \$2.6 million is not the last word that you have heard because my information – and it is the best information—is that the workers are not going to be satisfied. The employees – white collar and manual—are not going to be satisfied unless and until they get proper wages and proper salaries. So do not believe that the Service will forever close its mouth.

Understand that the teachers want more money and they will get more money, or else— white collar workers want more money, and they will get more money, or else—those workers who are represented by the Federation of Unions of Government Employees want more money, and they will get more money, or else. So let us face that fact. Let us not fool ourselves that by voting \$2.6 million, which we did not propose to vote before we have finished the quarrel.

The Government has agreed to go to Whitley Council. It had to be forced to go to Whitley Council. First of all, the Minister of Finance, I understand, could not give a decision. He had to consult. Secondly, he did not answer the letter on the question of Whitley Council and when he did answer, he and his Premier only wanted to submit to Whitley Council, the Government's recommendations or the Government's variations of the Guillebaud Report. Sufficient for that.

Let us consider a few of these items. Long ago, first of all let me say, it was decided by this House that Government would do away as far as

possible with the system of personal allowances. Yet, these recommendations are replete with personal allowances: Financial Secretary (now Secretary to the Treasury) – the personal allowance; Deputy Chief Medical Officer – personal allowance; Secretary to the Office of the Governor – personal allowance; Director of Marketing – personal allowance. Those are the personal allowances that I see at the moment. I do not know if they are special boys. I suppose there is some explanation for it., if so let us have the explanation.

There is something I am concerned about though in this change of the recommendations of Guillebaud in so far as some of the superscale posts are concerned. Guillebaud recommended for Judges \$11,520 per annum. This Government has decided to reduce it to \$10,560. Let me make it very clear that I am always of the conviction that the lower grades must get the first assistance; the ordinary daily worker must first get a reasonable day's wage. But there are certain considerations which a Government must have in mind. One of these considerations is the necessity for an erudite, experienced and impartial Judiciary. I know that you want to put in People's Judges. I know that you want to establish People's Courts, but even People's Judges and People's Court must have a certain amount of dignity. Even People's Judges and People's Courts – I know the Attorney-General would not agree with People's Judges and People's Courts – must be such that those who administer justice are above suspicion so far as the quality of their learning is concerned, and their impartiality.

It seems to me that the recommendations with respect to judges' salaries were not the recommendations that you ought to have changed.

[**An Hon. Member:** The Chief Justice.]

**Mr. Burnham:** The Chief Justice? That is a matter for you. I have no brief to hold for the judges. Those who know me know I have no reason to hold any brief for any judge, but it is the principle that is involved. I feel that the Government has made an awful mistake by rejecting the recommendations for a salary of \$11,520 for judges.

I notice, also, that so far as the Directors of Public Works, of Drainage and Irrigation, of Agriculture, etc., are concerned, there has been a change in the original recommendations. I can see that there is some difficulty in deciding what you are going to do with these superscale posts, but the fact is that, at the moment, you are competing in a market where there is a greater demand than the supply of top-flight qualified men, technologists and professional men. That is the fact you have to face. It is unfortunate that, thanks to the colonial system, we have not had more material available at that level and, thanks to the dilatoriness of this Government, which was its own predecessor, there are not more people nearing the point of experience and qualification to take over all of these posts immediately.

But it is a fact that it is difficult to get people to fill these technical posts unless you can pay them salaries or emoluments similar to or comparable with those which they can get in other parts of the world.

I note that the Attorney-General is to get \$11,400 per annum. First of all, I observe that Guillebaud's recommendation was for \$12,960 per annum. I have no love for the Attorney-General at all, but this I say, that it is important that the Government be advised by a competent and experienced member of the profession, and you cannot attract for long—I do not know how long the present Attorney-General will be attracted—a competent and experienced member of my profession for that sort of salary. It is something that this Government has to consider carefully. It is true that as between Ministers, the Attorney-Generalship might not be a senior Ministry like that of the Premier, but when we consider that the Premier is getting a \$500 house, plus \$200 for entertainment, it would be wise if it were considered proper to see to it that whoever you are going to have as Attorney-General is properly remunerated.

I hope that the little that has been given here does refer to the political Attorney-General, otherwise what have you put it here for? I hope that the Minister of Finance, especially as the Attorney-General is sitting on his right, will be questioned by him and he in turn will tell us whether or not this is intended to refer to the political Attorney-General. If it does, then I congratulate Government upon giving him an increase. If it does not, then I castigate them for being so short-sighted. If he is entitled to an increase I hope he will be given the \$12,960 proposed in the Guillebaud Report.

Guillebaud was invited to this country to report on the question to salaries, and his competence was assumed and vouched for by the Government who appointed him, and he was accepted by the Staff Associations, but his recommendations have now truncated. Either you agree or you do not agree that he is competent. If you accept his competency, for goodness sake shoemaker stick to your last. You invited Guillebaud because he was an economist and because he was competent. The two parties to the dispute, the employer and the employee, agreed on his competence and accepted him, but when he makes recommendations you change those recommendations all around.

As I understand further, not only was Guillebaud chosen by the Government and accepted by the Staff Associations for his expertise, but also were Col. Bernard, Mr. Kranenburg and Mr. Macnie, and then you truncate their Report. I do not know why some people and Governments create trouble for themselves. You have in this Sessional Paper which you have presented here, the seeds of disagreement and more trouble. Why don't you accept the whole of the Guillebaud recommendations and agree to go to Whitley Council on those points of the recommendations with which the Staff Associations do not agree? Argue all that Guillebaud was Government's agent, so to speak. Is Government denying agency and casting aside the expert whom it brought here?

You make a lot of changes in the recommendations of the Guillebaud Report. You want a loyal Police Force, such as you have at the moment, but you change the emoluments of officers as recommended by Guillebaud. You want a better educational system but you downgrade the salaries of Queen's College Masters, Bishops' High School Mistresses, and Senior Educational Officers. This Government must know where it is heading, but if I may be permitted to venture an opinion, I would briefly say that it is heading for trouble. It has not learnt its lesson, apparently. It feels that perhaps British troops will always come here to intimidate workers to go back to work, and that perhaps, having got this breathing space, it can visit the full severity of the law under the Essential Services Ordinance.

I would recommend to the Government to pass this \$2.6 million because I want to save you from the trouble that will take place if you do not, and I would not even like my enemies to be placed in such an embarrassing situation. After getting approval for the payout of \$2.6 million today, Government should decide to go to Whitley Council on those questions on which there is dispute. That seems to me the only sensible thing to do in the circumstances.

Yesterday, on the Motion for the Adjournment I criticised Government for its handling of the situation. First of all there was the unwillingness of the Government to negotiate, the impoliteness of the Minister of Finance who was written to since October, and unwillingness to make a decision for himself, unlike the Minister of Home Affairs who has just entered the Chamber. Don't you ever attempt to make unilateral decisions with respect to your workers wages and conditions of work! That is the gravest mistake which this Government made, and do not go about saying "*Not a cent more*", because when workers withhold their services you cannot run the Government. Although you may be able to recruit your supporters to come to Georgetown to support the Government you cannot get them to work with pen and ink.

As regards a strike against a working-class Government, we are not interested at this stage whether or not some people who today support the workers supported them some time before, or were against them. All that is past history; it is not relevant.

Let this be clearly understood, however, Dr. Jagan wrote in 1954 in his book, *Forbidden Freedom*, that the workers in British Guiana would not go out on a political strike, but would only go out on strike when conditions of work are unbearable. What was true of 1954 is true of 1962. Let us forget which businessman was sympathetic or unsympathetic. Remember your statement that workers will not go out unless their employers force them to do so by their attitude and treatment, and when they go out it means that you have fallen down, and it is all the more embarrassing when you claim to be a working-class Government. Do not let us have any talk about fascist and communist. That is not the point. The point is that you are the Government. The question is whether or not employers deal fairly with

their workers. This Government has not dealt fairly with its workers, and I am convinced that if it were to pay the increases recommended by the Guillebaud Commission, Government would get a more efficient Civil Service in whom it could have confidence and who would have confidence in Government. The result would be greater efficiency and greater revenue, and this country would move forward. What I offer you is my simple and humble advice, but it is a matter for you whether you accept this advice or not.

## Senior Legal Adviser and Legal Adviser for Police Department: 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** So far I am concerned, I agree that there is necessity to have a Senior Legal Adviser to the Police. In fact, for some years now, I have been making the suggestion that several Government Departments should have lawyers attached. I think it would make for more expedition and a higher quality of service from the respective Departments. When I saw the provision in the Estimates for these two posts, I welcomed such provision and the critical remarks I make this afternoon are not directed against the creation of these two posts; not directed against the individual who, I understand, will be appointed Senior legal Adviser; but against the undue haste in this particular case as against other cases.

A careful perusal of the Estimates which were submitted to us on 31<sup>st</sup> January, shows that, for instance, under 'Supreme Court and Deeds Registry', Head 4, there is a new post of Court Accountant. Are we to understand that there is no urgency about that? Under the same Head, you find a Senior Clerk – a new post – on the establishment. There is no haste to have us pass a Resolution to pay this person or the person to be appointed.

Let us turn to an important Head like 'Office of the Premier and Ministry of Development and Planning' on page 9 of the Estimates. A provision is made there for a new Principal Assistant Secretary. No urgency about that, Mr. Speaker? Continuing with the Office of the Premier and Ministry of Development and Planning, there is provision for an Inspecting Officer.

Then, we turn to the Ministry of Natural Resources – a most important Ministry; a Ministry under whose supervision falls, I think, the largest share or part of the development funds. We find it is proposed to have two Principal Assistant Secretaries in addition to the old establishment, and as we go through the Estimates I have been able to count something like over 20 new posts for the establishment, none of them I think unimportant. Public Works – 2 Senior Engineers; Drainage and Irrigation – 1 Executive Engineer; and one wonders what sort of discrimination is being exercised in this case that there should be a special Resolution for the post of Senior Legal Adviser and Legal Adviser. I do not know. I cannot understand, but I should hate to believe that what is being said in uniformed places has even scintilla of truth.

### [Interruption]

**Mr. Burnham:** The Hon. Minister of Natural Resources would like to hear, but I do not think I should repeat in this House the reasons that are being suggested outside for the undue haste this Government is showing in having a Resolution passed in respect of these two posts.

We appreciate that for one reason or another, one unfortunate incident or another, one calamity or another, it has taken us some time to pass the Appropriation Bill and, therefore, to give legal authority to the appointment of persons to new posts on the establishment. But does this Government for one moment imagine that we are that unreasonable that if it had come with a Motion to cover all these new posts, all of which are important for the smooth and efficient running of the Government, we would have voted against it? And even if we had voted against it, it has the numbers and it would have carried such a Resolution or Resolutions.

The Government, like Caesar's wife, must be above suspicion. It is not sufficient for the Hon. Minister of Finance to tell us here that it is considered necessary to have these posts; it is considered that the appointment is an urgent one. That I would say, with the greatest respect to the Minister of Finance, is an insult to our intelligence. It either means that the Minister of Home Affairs is more diligent with respect to his duties and the Departments that come within his portfolio than other Ministers, or it means that there is more in it than meets the eye. There is more in the mortar than the pestle.

As I was looking through the Estimates and I looked at the Attorney-General's Office, I noticed how many new posts have been created – none considered unnecessary – and I wondered how these officers were being paid; under what legal authority? When I look at the Head of 'Director of Public Prosecutions', I see a number of new officers and new posts which I know are being filled at the moment. Under what authority are these people being paid? Under the head of 'Printery' –

**[Mr. Speaker:** That is a different question.]

**Mr. Burnham:** I find that there is a number of new posts that have being created. First of all, why no Resolution, and secondly, under what legal authority are they being paid?

**[Mr. Speaker:** I do not think that is pertinent to the question before us.]

**Mr. Burnham:** Your Honour is always so kind to me to direct me to the proprieties of the situation.

Why does not the Government introduce one comprehensive Resolution to cover the holders of all these posts and also to facilitate the appointments of persons to the substantive posts? This sort of piecemeal attack on problems and difficulties is something that I have been criticising for the last four or five years, but it has always fallen on deaf ears. We hear from time to time the Government say, "*Your criticisms must be constructive.*" When you make them, your suggestions are ignored with the greatest hauteur, and when you criticize without suggestions you are told your criticisms are not constructive. Will this Government never learn?

There are two things that continue with this Government – the Minister of Works and Hydraulics' sense of humour which is original, destructive and peculiar, and its inability to tackle problems as a whole rather than piecemeal.

I will vote for the Motion, and I hope that the Public Service Commission will appoint a proper person. Some time ago the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics, Mr. Mann, appealed to us on this side to show tolerance and lend assistance. I am acceding to his request on this occasion, and I hope it will bear fruits.

## Pure Water Supply Programme: 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** Mr. Speaker, once again I support the Motion –

[**Mr. Bowman:** But...]

**Mr. Burnham:** – I notice that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Natural Resources is becoming psychic; he anticipated my conjunction, “*but*”. I would like the Hon. Minister to explain why the Government is at, this late stage, now making arrangements for a pure water supply for the Black Bush Area? I have heard complaints about the absence of a pure water supply in the Scheme. I am not talking about rattle snakes; I am talking about the absence of a pure water supply. It seems to me that if one is going to embark on a scheme like the Black Bush Polder Scheme, where one is not only going for land development but settlement of communities, one should have all the conveniences that go with a community. Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that if the Government were interested in the release of land to the settlers, it would also have completed the network for a Pure Water Supply Scheme. It seems to me that the Members of the Government feel that their support is so strong in Corentyne that they can get away with murder. But even fanatical supporters are human beings, and certain consideration should be given to their human needs and conveniences.

## Motion to Confirm Customs Order No. 3/1962: 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** I am in favour of the principle, but the legality, I submit, is absent. This is an Order made, I understand, under section 8 of the Customs Ordinance, Chapter 309. Section 9 provides for certain procedure which has not been adopted and, consequently, we will not be debating a nullity, I submit.

This Order which, under section 9, had to be laid within 21 days of its first publication, which happens to be the 27<sup>th</sup> January, was properly laid on the 9<sup>th</sup> February. That I agree with. But the last sentence of section 9 reads:

*"If the order be not submitted within the said period of twenty-one days to the Legislative Council for confirmation it shall ipso facto expire."*

In other words, what section 9 envisages is the laying –

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Burnham:** I wish some of the ignorant will only listen. The more intelligent always listen. I was saying, that section 9 envisages three things: that you lay at the earliest period after four days; that you lay within twenty-one days, and thirdly, that you submit it for confirmation within twenty-one days.

This Order has not been submitted for confirmation within twenty-one days and, consequently, I submit, it would amount to a nullity. I repeat that I am in favour of the exemption, but I am submitting that this Order that is being discussed today cannot give the exemption which is hoped for.

On a matter of personal explanation, Mr. Speaker, adding nothing new, I think my Hon. and learned Friend, the Attorney-General, did not quite get the particular point I was making at this stage. I was not making the point on "*submission*". I was merely stating the point that it would appear from the last sentence of section 9 that the submission for ratification or confirmation should be within the twenty-one days.

I appreciate very keenly the observations made by the Attorney-General. They have been made by one whose learning permits him to recognise the possibility that he is not right—so different from some other people who prefer to giggle when these points are made. I also appreciate his suggestion to leave this matter to the arbitrement of the court, but I am not for encouraging litigation and the expense of litigation. Perhaps, this is the sort of matter that may be referred to a Select Committee of this House for consideration as to what new legislation may be put up.

This is not a matter for Party differences, and I appreciate the attitude that has been adopted by the Attorney-General. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate him.

## Motion on the Second Reading of Appropriation Bill: 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** It is true that this discussion in theory centres around the Motion for the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill, and it is true that the Appropriation Bill does little more than set out certain proposals for expenditure on various Departments and services, both tradition and good sense suggest and demand that this opportunity be used to congratulate the Government or to criticise the Government, to commend the Government or to castigate the Government, and I propose to take full advantage of this *carte blanche* which is given to us at this period.

The Hon. Minister of Finance when, in almost mock heroic terms, he introduced his Budget on the 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1962, observed that the occasion was historic. Let me immediately concede that, indeed, it was historic from the point of view, as he said, that it was the first time an Elected Minister was presenting the Budget. But it is not enough to take pride in such a trifling accident of history. Many events are historic. When Caligula made his two horses consuls of Rome that was an historic event. But I had hoped that the presentation of our Budget for the first time by an Elected Minister would have been historic in that we would have seen more foresight than we have hitherto experienced; a greater willingness to break away from the old pattern; a greater willingness to smash the old order and to remove these unsavoury and disgusting parts of the Budget against which the PPP has been most vocal in the past in its opposition.

So far as this Budget is concerned, I would say that in spite of the trumpeting; in spite of the long lectures we have had from Hon. Members on the other side, there has been no imagination displayed by the Government and it has shown a marked inability to grapple with the most serious situation in this country. When one looks at the Budget, as I understand it, there are two criteria to be taken into consideration:

- (1) The ideology behind the framing of the Budget;
- (2) The competence of the Government in executing or giving practical effect to its ideology.

Perhaps it is apposite for us to start from the first criterion, that of the ideology of the Government, as I understand the words uttered by Members of the Government. I emphasise the words, because so often when I hear Members of the Government speaking I am reminded of a passage I used to do in an examination paper—I think it was said about Hamlet—

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Burnham:** Sir, on many occasions it seems to me that we have on the Government Benches, and this includes the Hon. Minister of Works, Hydraulics and "*Humour*", the lineal descendants of Hamlet—they are full of words. How are they running the Government? Only last week the Government was able to complete its payments to its employees for the month of March. Now let us take the words of the Hon. Members of this Government; let us try to make some sense of their words; let us look at the Budget presented to this House. The Party in the Government calls itself a socialist Party. I am not an obeah man; I am not *au fait* with the writing of all of the authors referred to; I do not know all of these professors; I am a very simple man with a limited intelligence and intellect. I am no psychiatrist and, like so many people in British Guiana, I do not know what is in other people's minds. But, as I understand socialism, it means the organisation of society where, instead of putting the emphasis on profits for a few, the emphasis is placed on production to meet the needs of the community.

One of the tenets of socialism, as I understand it, is that you should seek—if you say you are a socialist, and if you enjoy the following that the PPP enjoys at the moment—to organise the production and the economy of the country so that there will be a proper distribution of what the country produces; the working-class would come into its own, and there would be the end of discrimination.

It is significant that the Hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics should refer to me. But up to a few days ago his Premier—perhaps he hopes to join the long list of defeated Premiers.

As far as I understand socialism, it is sometimes succinctly expressed in the statement: "*From each according to his ability; to each according to his need.*" Starting with this definition – it is not my definition; I do not claim to be some little fellow raised to heights of which I did not dream and has suddenly become intellectual overnight – one would have expected that in a Budget proposed by a socialist Party, and in case I am referring to the Budget of the 31<sup>st</sup> January, the distribution of taxation would have been such as to take care of those who have the ability to pay rather than to include those who have been aptly described as the disinherited of our society whose faces have been ground down for so many years. One would have expected that, of course, this socialist Party would have discarded the imperialist and colonialist emphasis on the raising of taxation on widely used commodities in order to get revenue. The definition for which I claim no originality – not being a plagiarist- I will confess I got it from the Hon. the Premier. In keeping with that definition any taxation on widely used commodities means taxation on the working class.

[**Mr. Benn:** Lipstick]

**Mr. Burnham:** Of course, I cannot blame the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources for his inability to have a finer aesthetic sense. Would he think that lipstick is a luxury? I would tell you that I would be most disgusted if our womenfolk were to give up the use of lipstick, for to my mind socialism is not synonymous with dowdyism. But as I was saying, one would have expected that a socialist Government would have changed the emphasis and incidence of taxation.

But what do we find in the original proposals of the Budget? The Hon. Minister of Finance, who I know did not do mathematics at school, said that customs—

[**Mr. Wilson:** Personal.]

**Mr. Burnham:** —If it is personal, I immediately apologise, but I thought it was a statement of fact which could have been contradicted by the Minister in his reply. But as I was saying, he said that Customs and Excise accounts for about one-third of the revenue—

[**Dr. Jacob:** Where?]

**Mr. Burnham:** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for your protection, but, with all due respect to your ruling, I assume that the Hon. Minister did honestly seek this information and I am prepared to give it by referring—on page 4 of the original Budget statement of the 31<sup>st</sup> January 1962, paragraph 10, in the second sentence, one finds this:

*“Unfortunately, similar tribute cannot be paid in respect of import and excise duties, but I give notice that maladministration and irregularities will no longer be tolerated in the Customs and Excise Department, which is now responsible for about one-third of our total revenue.”*

As I understand it, if the Customs and Excise Department is responsible for one-third of our total revenue, the picture which the Minister intended to paint was that Customs and Excise duties are responsible for one-third of revenue. But, of course, I may be mistaken, and I have learnt sufficient humility to be prepared to be corrected.

May I observe that on the proposal which is contained in these Estimates, one finds that out of a total revenue anticipated of \$58,459,675, Customs and Excise are supposed to bring \$27,882,000, and, subject to the assistance which I may get from an adding or calculating machine, that, I say, is 47.69 percent of the revenue. It, therefore, seems that the first things that we would have expected from a socialist Party with respect to this Budget was absolutely missing on the 31<sup>st</sup> January.

It is true that there were taxes like the capital gains tax, the net property tax and the gift tax, and a great hue and cry was made about those taxes—

that they were intended to equalise, they were intended to soak the rich to help the poor. But they were to be responsible for a miserly \$1 million, approximately, out of an additional \$10.5 million, whereas Customs and Excise were to be responsible for \$5.5 million of the additional revenue of \$10.5 million. It seems to me, therefore, that on its very protestations and professions, the People's Progressive Party Government has shown that either it is not socialist or it is incompetent to adapt socialism to our circumstances, or adopt socialism for the purpose of our Budget.

The People's National Congress has been greatly maligned in that it was, at one time, suggested – I note, with interest the more conciliatory attitude which is being displayed now – that the People's National Congress opposed the Budget because it was a Budget that hit the rich. A lot has been said here about false accusations, and I have not the sensitivity of the Leader of the People's Progressive Party when, according to him, he is falsely accused. But nothing could have been further from the truth than to have suggested that the People's National Congress opposed the original Budget of the 31<sup>st</sup> January because of the taxation introduced on the rich.

We do not oppose the Gift Tax. We do not and have never opposed it. We do not and have never opposed the Capital Gains Tax *per se*. As the Hon. Member for Upper Demerara River, Mr. Jordan, remarked during the course of his contribution, we feel that it would be much more sensible and easier to operate if the Capital Gains Tax were to be fixed tax rather than being sort of absorbed into Income Tax. We do not and have never opposed, as it stands at the moment, Tax on Net Property.

If I remember correctly, when the House rose at 6.30 p.m. today I was making the observation that the People's National Congress did not oppose the Capital Gains Tax nor the Gift Tax, nor in principle do we oppose the Tax on Net Property. Our opposition was mainly directed to Customs Duties, the imposition of which resulted in the increased cost of widely used commodities, and this increased cost would have meant the lowering of the already low standards of the working class. And I would say that our Party was rather concerned that a so called socialist Party could seek to raise the bulk of the new extra revenue from the pockets of the poor. But what was most interesting was the temerity and transparent sophistry of the Government which, in those circumstances, sought to convince the world that this was a revolutionary Budget which was seeking to distribute income – tax the rich to aid the poor. They would have had the world believe that they were Robin Hood come to life in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

But the People's National Congress also opposed and was most critical too of the Compulsory Savings Scheme, not because we do not concede that a country must contribute to its development, not because we think there should be no contribution from the Guianese people to the development finance, but for two particular reasons. The first was that it was psychologically bad to make the savings compulsory. Perhaps the preponderance of academicians in the People's Progressive Party is

responsible for these awful mistakes they make from time to time. Kaldor, to my mind, was merely supplementing the list of theorists and theoreticians who seem to live and have their being several feet above the ground.

The Hon. The Premier was so kind to us this afternoon to regale us with an account of the growth of the economy of the Soviet Union, but even the Soviet Union, his intellectual, ideological and philosophical home, does not have compulsory saving. Mr. Kaldor, apparently, did persuade the Government of Ghana to levy compulsory savings. That, of course, resulted in certain strikes, if not disturbances, in the Takoradi area, but, unfortunately, the Premier does not have that predominant support; he does not have that personality to command the workers to return to work, as did Nkrumah; nor does he have the power and influence to throw trade union leaders into gaol because they object to certain forms of taxation or compulsory savings. It is, of course, the sorry end to which this Government has been brought, that it would have thought it necessary to make savings compulsory. Perhaps, looking at it objectively, one could well sympathize, without agreeing the past few years a loan of \$2½ million caused so much difficulty so far as subscription was concerned, perhaps it was logical for the Government to assume that if those savings were to be optional rather than compulsory, the response would have been most embarrassing to the prestige of the Government and its ability to find funds for development.

I remarked that we opposed primarily those taxes which weighed heavily on the poor workers. I am not a statistician, but I have reason to doubt the expertise of the Premier who says that those taxes which had been introduced and subsequently withdrawn would have been responsible for a rise of only one point in the Cost of Living Index. Apart from the fact that the Premier has for years advertised the inaccuracy of the Cost of Living Index figures, practical experience since the imposition of the new duties, or at least during the period that those new duties were collectible, leads me to believe that it cannot be accurate, or perhaps one point in the Cost of Living Index, with which I have no familiarity, represents about 25 percent on the budget of the ordinary housewife who has to provide for her home. For instance, take a simple article like salmon which, under the former specific rate of duty, paid a duty of \$18, but under the proposals of the Minister of Finance, as adumbrated to this House on the 31<sup>st</sup> January, paid a duty of \$170.

Indeed the Budget was historic. Indeed the period was historic, but it was historic not for the reasons given by the Minister of Finance but for other reasons. For instance, never before has the working-class as a group, regardless of differences of scale and categories of occupation, show such vitality in its opposition to what I still contend was a most wicked and disgusting Budget.

I admire the skill with which the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics sought to explain the situation when he said that, a Government of this sort could not afford to have such a large

section of the working class demonstrating against it, no matter how unjustifiable the demonstration might have been. As far as I am concerned, the demonstration was eminently justified and justifiable because, as I think most people have had to concede, the proposals in the Budget would have meant an unbearable burden upon the shoulders of the working-class whom this Government would have us believe is its special ward.

It was in this period of historic acts that, for the first time in the history of this country, a substantial part of the Budget has had to be withdrawn. So far as my recollection goes, it was only in 1952 where we saw a minor item, the tax on soft drinks, withdrawn from the Budget. It is historic, I repeat, because for the first time in the history of this country the main and important proposals in a Budget were withdrawn by the Government as a consequence of spontaneous organisation and opposition on the part of the working-class.

It serves no useful purpose in these circumstances for this Government to accuse A, B, or C with being responsible for organising the workers or organising their opposition to the Budget, for I recall most vividly in 1954 when a certain gentleman said that the workers of British Guiana would never come out on strike for political reasons but only when conditions of work and labour etc. become unbearable. What was true in 1954 is also true in 1962. It seems to me that this Government either misjudged the attitude and feelings of the workers, or acted ruthlessly and callously.

However, certain portions of the Budget have been withdrawn, and the only congratulations I propose to shower at this moment will be showered not upon the incompetent, short-sighted Government, but upon the workers for marching as one to defend their rights against a callous, unconscionable Government. This Government or the Party in the Government claims to be socialist, but I recall last year when the Hon. Premier went to the United States of America, he was overhead by me to say that he was a socialist but would not allow that fact to impede the development of this country. Those words, thought and expression seem strange to me for, socialist that I am, I cannot myself see in what way socialism can impede the development of an emerging country like British Guiana. One wonders what the Premier really means by "*socialist*".

The taxes introduced and the other proposals in the Budget, as I said before, do not weigh particularly heavily on the rich and those who own property. But it seems to me that those who own property in this country were frightened; they were frightened because of the attitude of the Government and the political statements made by its Leaders from time to time. As in law, one has to depend on the actions, acts and statements of the Members of the Government to find out what they had in mind. The statements made by the Members of this Government over the years have been such as to lead people to believe, whether they are rich or poor, that the socialism of which the PPP speaks is the socialism which we find expressed in the confiscation of property, and the curtailment of what is called the formal democratic rights of the people.

Mr. Speaker, if one of the fairer sexes here were to conduct herself as to give one the impression that she is *demimonde*, then she has only herself to blame if other members of the community assume the absence of chastity on her part. If the Government or a Party goes around singing the praise of one section of the world, and making itself an apologist for what Khrushchev says and the dictatorial acts of Stalin, what impression will it convey? Is it surprising that many people in Guiana and out of Guiana assume that the techniques used in the Soviet Union where there is one party, where elections are but a farce because you can vote only for one party; where Stalin sent people to Siberia, are what the PPP would adopt? Why do the Members of this Government quarrel, if people assume that this is the system which they would introduce into British Guiana if they had the opportunity? I am not categorising, but, like so many people in British Guiana, I can judge only from the utterances of the Members of this Government.

I agree that there were many who, having a vested interest in the perpetuation of their privileged positions, were opposed to these new taxes, but the Government by its previous action had given their arguments some plausibility.

[Mr. Wilson: Join hands.]

**Mr. Burnham:** Indeed the PNC had to join hands in opposing the ill-advised and dictatorial Proclamation of Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1962. The PNC was following in the footsteps of the erstwhile socialist in the PPP at the recent Election rather than in keeping out the alleged capitalist bloodsuckers who now grace this Chamber. We are aware of what happened when they sought their votes in Georgetown – the Members of the PPP were told how to vote in Georgetown.

[An Hon. Member: A marriage.]

**Mr. Burnham:** It is no use talking about any marriage.

The PPP and its Ministers should rethink on the conciliatory attitude of this Government, the benevolence and sincerity of which I am not in a position to vouch for. Does this talk of cooperation by the PPP mean that it will desist from abusing everyone who disagrees with its policy? Almost with tears in his eyes and a sob in his throat the Hon. Premier bemoaned the fact that in these days as soon as you disagree with someone you are called a communist. It is only the appellation that is changed, because as soon as you disagree with the PPP you are either an imperialist stooge or a capitalist stooge, or a fascist. Of course once before, the communist and the fascist got together in 1939 when Hitler signed a pact with Stalin. Once in British Guiana, in 1962, the communist and the fascist got together in Georgetown Central.

In governing a country like British Guiana, the economic position of which it is conceded by the Hon. Premier is far from attractive, one has to adopt a realistic attitude. What sense does it make, when one is going to the United States of America to seek financial aid, to have the wife of the Hon. Premier and Secretary to the Government Party in Havana attending an anti-US demonstration? That is not neutrality. It was not the PPP that first adumbrated the policy of neutrality for British Guiana.

Sir, in October, 1960, when the Leader of the PPP was speaking to the TUC he said that so far as his Party was concerned it would not be the pawn of neither the East nor West. But, perhaps, a little reflection on the part of the Hon. Premier will show him that his declarations have not been those of one who would be objectively considered a neutralist.

I am prepared to make apology for the American economy. I heard a lot about figures this evening. Maybe they are accurate; maybe all of the observations are apposite and timely, but are they relevant to our situation.

So far as the People's National Congress is concerned, we do not, whoever else may suggest, that for one moment British Guiana and the Government of British Guiana should become the servants of the United States and should become the sycophantic admirers of the United States economy. Indeed, I am convinced that British Guiana cannot be developed successfully. I am convinced that we shall be unable to give to the people of this country their just deserts if we were to attempt to use the American economy as our prototype.

But without saying whether or not this Government should seek aid from America, I merely observe that it is the epitome of unrealism to be abusing America, criticising America, and never the other bloc, and going to America and asking for aid. To gain aid, one does not have to crawl on one's belly but one must be sufficiently politically astute to understand that perhaps Jesus was the only man yet created who would have taken a lambasting and still be prepared to help. It was Jesus who spoke about turning the left cheek if you are struck on the right, not the United States or the Soviet Union.

The criticism has been made that the fact that our economy is not as buoyant as it should have been is attributable to the present Government. It is the conviction of the People's National Congress that if the People's Progressive Party, which is the Government, had a more intelligent approach, things would not have been as bad as they are now, and I shall deal with that aspect a little later.

Perhaps, this is the point at which one may make reference to certain poses and attitudes current among the Ministers of the Government. As soon as a criticism is made, these political Eves of the second half of the twentieth century say, "*Not me! It is the imperialism.*" Now the latest is, "*Not me! It is the looting and incendiaryism of Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> February.*" As I understand it, when a Party goes to the polls and seeks the suffrage of the electorate, it

sets itself up as being competent to change the sorry scheme of things entirely. That is what the people vote for a Party for: a belief in the competence of the Party to correct the wrongs of the past; a belief in the ability of the Party to change these things which were wrong.

So, after five years, to come here and merely say, "*It is imperialism*" is all nonsense, if that is a parliamentary term. If you knew that the legacies of imperialism were so terrible, so long-lasting, that you could not make the slightest change; if you knew it was so hard that you could not even scratch it, why didn't you tell the people? Don't you know that the legacies of imperialism and the incompetence were all so terrible that five years after you would have been just where you started?

The Government must understand this: it was put in to govern; it was put in to improve the economy of the country; it was put in to make things better, not to make excuses. When you want a person to make excuses, you brief a lawyer, you don't vote for politicians. Historic indeed! They present a Budget. They withdraw the Budget virtually, and have not yet been able to justify the first Budget because if they attempt to justify the first Budget, it means that they were fooled to withdraw it.

[**Mr. Ram Karran:** How clever!]

**Mr. Burnham:** – Cleverness is not necessary. The Hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics is overestimating the amount of cleverness necessary to see something that hits a blind man in his eye.

It is the conviction of the People's National Congress Party that it could not have worked miracles during its term of office from 1957 to 1962, but it would have done much better. It could have done much better if it had pursued a realistic attitude with respect to foreign assistance. Foreign assistance alone cannot develop this country. That is agreed. You talk about getting this and that from the Eastern Bloc. Where is it? You are talking about that since 1957. And rest assured, you need have no fear so far as the Eastern Bloc is concerned. If you get a sound, attractive offer from the Eastern Bloc, the People's National Congress is not going to oppose it. The PNC does not oppose trade on the basis of ideology. The PNC will not support any offer of deal or what have you, on the basis that it is not to the advantage of the country. It has nothing to do with ideology.

It seems to me that like their friend, Castro, the Members of the Government overestimated the amount of assistance that was forthcoming from the Eastern Bloc. I have been hearing about this glass factory since 1959, and these package deals, I have heard rumours about them for years. But we cannot see them; up to now they are not here. And the Government knew that the only Party in this country that could give them a fight at the polls, the People's National Congress, had publicly said, "*Trade where you want, provided each deal is to the advantage of the country, not necessarily to the disadvantage of the other party to the particular trade deal*". May I en passant,

ask the Hon. Minister of Finance, who, I understand, is the only speaker from the Government Benches after I have spoken, what happened to the Cuban timber deal?

Let us, before we consider some of the irrelevancies and *non sequiturs* with which we have been entertained by the Hon. the Premier, consider the historic Budget as amended. In other countries the Government would have resigned. Was the People's Progressive Party so solicitous of the expenditure of funds for elections that it did not want to engulf the country in new expenses for elections or was it afraid to go to the polls? Of course, when all the tumult and shouting had died, when the "*Limey*" bayonets had arrived, I heard the Premier coming out and saying, "*I will not resign. You can underscore that.*" I wonder why he did not say it on Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup>, or Thursday, the 15<sup>th</sup>, or Friday, the 16<sup>th</sup> or even Saturday, the 17<sup>th</sup> February, before the Government workers went out and the strike ended.

But let us consider some of these tax proposals as set out here. Income tax: all right, no particular objection except that I will say the income tax personal allowance of \$800 is unreasonable in that it makes taxable the ordinary worker who draws a \$3.04 minimum. One objects, and these things must be stated because the past masters of misrepresentation are to be found across the Table. No one from the People's National Congress objects to the extra income tax for the higher brackets. No one objects to the tightening of the legislation to prevent subsidiaries from understating the prices of their products when sold to the parent bodies. No one objects to a tightening of the legislation so far as tax holidays are concerned. But what we object to is the elasticity of the proposals with respect to the tightening up of the provisions that relate to tax holidays for new and pioneer industries.

Unless my learned friend, the Hon. the Attorney-General, reduces to precision the Government's proposals, these proposals leave the position unpredictable so far as the Government is concerned. Says the Minister of Finance:

*"The tax holiday legislation will be repealed but incentives to industrial development will be provided through tariff concessions to manufacture for the home market, through accelerated write-off of capital expenditure for tax purposes (as proposed in this section of the Budget Speech) and through negotiated concessions, if necessary, to industries producing for the export market. Private investors will be invited to participate in Government industrial enterprises."*

It seems to me here, if I understand the proposals as contained on page 2 of the amended Budget Statement, that a large area of administrative discretion will be left to the Government, which is undesirable and certainly not such as to be conducive to attracting investors and entrepreneurs. Mind you, this is the Government which frowns on private enterprise.

I am not discussing whether having private enterprise is good or bad. I am judging them on their own words.

Since the Members of the Government say they want private enterprise – so they say – it seems to me, if they mean what they say, that it is necessary and desirable to attract private investors into the manufacturing and entrepreneurial fields, either on their own or as partners with Government, that they have got to be more precise in their legislation and their policy, and the areas of discretion should be clearly known. It should perhaps be an area of percentage, but certainly not left as vague as adumbrated by the Hon. Minister of Finance here.

The Capital Gains Tax and Gift Tax we do not oppose. I have already observed that you cannot blame those who think this is the thin edge of wedge, and remember that mere asseveration at Budget time in the House cannot create confidence in your intentions, because while you are saying one thing you have your satellites and lieutenants in the country saying another thing. Let us be frank about it, that the PPP like all democratic parties, supported Castro in his revolution against Batista. The PPP, after Castro was successful, went on to say he was the greatest liberator of the century. The People's Progressive Party has at all times until today accepted and supported everything that has happened in Cuba. Without attempting on our part a qualitative judgment, I put it this way: Castro is the hero of the PPP, though I hope the thought of this will be pushed further into the background by his colleagues.

Castro, after his successful revolution, said he was pledged to maintain free elections and what are called the formal democratic freedoms. Afterwards he gave a reason why it was not necessary to have free elections, a reason which does not persuade me. It may persuade others. Well, people object to this and say *"If these people are worshippers of Castro, and Castro said one thing and later on said something else, is it not reasonable to believe that they are merely being astute in the particular circumstances when they say they will not do this and will not do that?"* I am a Guianese, I am opposed to the PPP, but, after all, since they are in office I think it my bounden duty as a Guianese to explain to them why people do not believe them, why they come here and say *"We will not do this."* When we find Guianese leaving their country it is no answer to say they are leaving because of the United Force, by its fear campaign, is succeeding where you have failed. Mr. Speaker, I must –

### [Interruption]

**Mr. Burnham:** As I was saying, that would be a confession by the PPP Government that the United Force has a much more effective propaganda machine so far as reaching the minds of the community is concerned. And it is no answer to say, as did the Hon. Premier two weeks ago at a press conference, that people are leaving the country because of unemployment.

It has been shown for some time now that the immigrants to the United Kingdom from the West Indies and British Guiana are not primarily from the ranks of the unemployed. They are skilled people, many of them. Many of them are semi-skilled; many of them with a little more, shall we say – to use a word which would be easily understood but I do not think accurately describe the situation—ambitious than others. That is the type of person who has been migrating from this country and the other Caribbean territories.

So that unemployment is a facile but unsatisfactory answer. The question is whether those people see a future in British Guiana. For myself I think anyone who migrates is a coward. How can you expect to go to other people's country to enjoy what they have built up if you are not prepared to stay here and fight, if necessary? I think such people are despicable cowards and they are less than men. But then the world is made of men and mice, and if you know by our acts, by your faults you are going to cause more cowards or less courageous ones to run a war, and you know that you need all the human resources you can possibly get to build this country, it is time you start some rethinking and reconsideration of your attitudes and your policies.

The Budget is replete with lots of fine phrases, but phrases cannot run a country; they cannot improve economic conditions. Let us examine for a moment, now that we have considered for a while the ideology, the competence, the other criterion of this Government. How intelligent is this Government? I heard the Premier to say that his Government has been accused of incompetence. First of all, the price one pays for entering into public life is the privilege of being criticised publicly. The price a party pays for being in Government is to be criticised for everything, including incompetence, and it is nothing short of childish, puerile, to come into this Chamber and to get annoyed because you are accused of incompetence. What you should do is to show that you are not incompetent if you can succeed in proving it, or be men enough to admit that a mistake has been made, and try to do better.

Instead, Members of the Government come here with long quotations about Latin America. A certain gentleman, not an elected Member of the House but a Member of the House, knows that we have heard most of those quotations before, during the last four or five years—quotations of what Dr. Castro and Nehru have said. Quotations do not do anything; they do not gloss over incompetence. I share the view of my English Master that prolonged quotation is not an ostentatious display of learning, but clear evidence of the absence of absorptive capacity. You cannot absorb what you read, so you come here with a lot of papers and say that Mr. X says this and Mr. Y or Professor Z says this. It is a wonder we do not now hear of what Lord Trefgarne said. Apart from the fact that I think it is proof of little or no absorptive capacity, I think it is irrelevant to our present situation.

We agree with you that there has been exploitation in Latin America. We do not want to hear those facts and figures again. We want this Government to so guide our destinies and the economy of this country that British Guiana will not be another Brazil, or another Latin American country. No academic learning or quotation of figures to show how many millions or billions were made by exploiters in other countries will help the situation in this country. This Government has been palpable incompetent, I say. We hear from the Premier that the PPP was the first party to talk about economic planning, and for his talk about it he was dubbed a communist. I do not know. That is history, but in 1957 the PPP went into office. In 1962, five years after, the Party, whose Leader claims that when he was in the Opposition in the period 1947—1953, he was the first person to talk about economic planning, is still saying “*We are planning to have an economic planning unit.*” He went to England with the Governor and said he wanted \$200 million, but the Governor said “*You cannot get anything on ‘guesstimates’.*”

You come here with a Budget after the Ministries had submitted their proposals. How long can Ministries submit proposals for development plans? The political head cannot submit it, and a civil servant in the ordinary clerical and administrative service cannot submit it. It is a matter for proper investigation, a matter for proper assessment and collation of data. You do not draft a Development Programme by using your skill at adding figures. That is the first evidence of this Government's incompetence. We hear of Professor Bettelheim. At last they have been able to get him—the same Professor Bettelheim whose Development Programme Sekou Toure rejected, and in *Monthly Review*, a left wing American periodical, subscribed to by the PPP, he is castigated by another Marxist economist for being backward, unprogressive and unimaginative. It is not without significance that even among the Marxist economists the PPP has to find the most backward, unimaginative and incompetent.

I was speaking of the Government's ability to set up an Economic Planning Unit, although it was in office for five years. I have already referred to this Government's approach to agriculture. The production of rice has increased, and drainage as well as irrigation have been improved for the production of more rice. Now the Government wants to tax foodstuffs. The Hon. Minister of Finance says that one of the purposes of this new tax proposal is to protect or encourage local production. But what have we seen?

In the 1940s when the Hon. Premier entered into the field of politics, he remarked that in British Guiana one ate everything out of a can; everything was canned, and he used to make a pun, when we were in England in 1954, that our food was canned and our music was canned. Up to 1962 that is still true. If one wants peas, one takes it out of a can; if one wants tomato juice, one gets it in a can; if one wants pineapple when it is out of season,

one can get it in a can. We are eating almost everything out of a can and the can is not even made here. They have not yet canned cassava here or elsewhere, but they have canned milk elsewhere and not here.

It seems to me to be elementary that, so far as our agricultural policy is concerned, there should have been an emphasis on the diversification of our produce so as to satisfy our own needs. That, as the Hon. Minister of Finance recognises, would result in our saving foreign exchange which can be used for the purchase of capital goods and starting developmental schemes. There is a glut in pineapples periodically, but nothing has been done to set up the necessary facilities for canning the orange juice that is extracted from oranges that will cost about \$80,000. Where do we see evidence of that in Government's agricultural policy? All we can see is rice, rice.

After 5 years in office the Members of the Government are still saying that they cannot get capitalists to come in and establish a canning factory. If the Members of the Government believe in State enterprises, why can't they start State enterprises in these fields? The PNC is not going to oppose it. I cannot understand why the PPP continues to make these mistakes. I cannot understand why it does not do the obvious. It is taxing salmon, but does nothing about fisheries. I am a member of the Ad Hoc Fisheries Committee, and I say that nothing has been done by way of preserving and/or storing fish. At one time one sees thousands of tons of fish being thrown away in this country, and yet one has to buy salt fish not because of one's taste, but because fresh fish is not available.

We have heard a lot about infrastructure, but I can only think of infrared. Those things are for the economists. There are so many things we can do if we had the will, courage and foresight. I understand from the Hon. Premier that there is a lot of good will for British Guiana outside of this country. Then let that good will be translated into the establishment of the infrastructure or the infrared structure or what have you while we use the facilities we have in diversifying our agriculture. Be a little more sensible in our distribution, marketing and transport. It is not beyond the competence of this Government to provide refrigeration for the fish. The Government can then tax more heavily commodities like imported milk and salmon etc., but it should produce the alternative items before introducing such taxation.

Another indication of incompetence is the sort of haughty, inconsiderate attitude of this Government to its employees. Of course we heard from the Hon. Minister of Finance in his Budget Speech on January 31 that Government recognised the need for an efficient Civil Service. But what is needed in British Guiana today is not only an efficient, but an enthusiastic Civil Service. Efficiency is easy to come by; efficiency is merely doing exactly what you are supposed to do in a given time. This Government does not have the enthusiastic support of the Civil Service because it has been prodigal of such potential support. First of all, we are off with the

cliché of the Civil Service being the “stooges” of our imperialist masters. Secondly, we hear “not a cent more in 1959.” Thirdly, we hear cajolery, abuse, and then of strike. There is no doubt about these facts.

In the past the civil servants have looked to the colonial power for preferment and promotion. An efficient civil servant always shows that he can keep well in with the powers that be. But we are moving to Independence, and, in the same way as certain ex-members of the Interim Government have been accommodated by the PPP on the assumption that they have changed, it is necessary for the Government by its attitude to ensure that a change takes place amongst the civil servants.

In India Sir Maharaj Singh was a valuable servant to the British imperialists, but he was accommodated into the new system and became the Governor of Bombay. The same may be said of the top-brass of the Indian Civil Service, but the trouble about this Government is that it is too doctrinaire in its approach and too haughty in its attitude. The civil servants should have been inspired from the time this Government came into office, because 1957 was the beginning of the end of the colonial system. From the time this Government came into office it should have, by its pronouncements and its attitudes, taken the civil servants into its confidence and should have made it clear to them that they were an integral part of the new order which was to be established. This Government has failed palpably in its relations with the Civil Service, and only God knows whether this relationship which has deteriorated can ever be improved.

Look at the enthusiasm one finds in the Civil Service in Trinidad and Jamaica, and compare it with enthusiasm in the Civil Service in British Guiana! It makes no sense to blame the Civil Service in British Guiana for this state of affairs. It is for the Government to make the wrong right. Some Hon. Members say: Let the civil servants go; we can always find people to take their places; we have a lot of people unemployed. Other Hon. Members say: Do not worry about ability and qualifications—those are old imperialist methods of giving preference and preferment to the privileged class. Where are we going to at this rate?

With reference to Guianisation, what are we doing about it? A foreigner has been brought here to be the Commissioner of Police even before the retirement of the first Guianese Commissioner of Police. Can you imagine this nationalist Government, this socialist Government, this revolutionary Government importing a foreigner to be the new Commissioner of Police?

“*We want Independence,*” says the Government. I do not know whether I am myopic. I have searched the Estimates in vain for provision for the training of the necessary personnel to man our Foreign Services. If I were myopic, I would have sought the good offices of the Hon. Minister of Finance in his professional as distinct from his political capacity. I am told that when we were independent we can ask Britain to represent us, and if it happens that Britain’s principles are different from ours we can ask

somebody else to represent us. Can't we be realistic? Can't we see that the centre of power is shifted to British Guiana? Can't we see that the responsibility is ours, if we want to make a reality of Independence? Government must have confidence in its administration. I suppose the Members of Government will learn in time. However it will be necessary to have the basic staff to represent us overseas, and people must be trained and qualified to do that.

Another indication of incompetence is to be found in education. The Hon. Member of Abary has already observed that it is indicative of the Government's disregard for education and the low priority that it has not seen fit to appoint a Member of this, the more important House, as Minister of Education and, further, has not even done this House the courtesy of appointing a Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Education in this House; so there is no one here to speak with authority. There may be some who speak with the tongue of Pharisees and Scribes, but no one to speak here with authority on the question of education.

We are going to have, we are told, an accelerated programme of training. We are going to send more people into the Government Training College because there is a paucity of trained teachers and too great a preponderance of untrained teachers can be appreciated, I believe, by the Hon. Minister of Communications (Mr. Wilson), but when they are making provision for courses for teachers, they just upped it by \$2,500—from \$6,000 to \$8,500—this year. But you get some new set of jobs for the boys—this is how education suffers—88 village workers—\$103,200—not for more trained teachers, but for jobs for the boys euphemistically described as village workers.

Private secondary schools: we heard an exchange between one Minister and the Hon. Member for Georgetown North as to why Government is not prepared to give more money. The Minister said that it was because these schools were privately run and the money would be put into the pockets of those who owned the schools. Probably, that was an attempt to be humorous, but the Minister should be reminded that it was not upon his ability as a humorist that he was elected a Minister.

The private secondary schools operating in this country are providing a service, a service which Government ought to have provided and a service which Government will, we hope in the not too distant future, provide directly. It seems to me that it is only reasonable that private secondary schools should be further assisted by the Government if there is to be an improvement of our educational system and facilities, and if there is to be an integration of our educational system, because you cannot compel an integration unless you have a part in it and pay the piper.

If, perchance, there are some Principles of private secondary schools who like to pocket the money, there is the Attorney-General, one of the finest of our lawyers, very competent, and he can draft the necessary legislation and regulations to prevent school Principles from stealing the money. Certainly,

the Minister who made that observation must have intended to be facetious or to insult our intelligence. It is the same Hon. Minister who said that the Government could not vote \$100 a month to pay rural letter-carriers to deliver the people's letters in Wismar, but it can pay the Premier \$200 a month to entertain whom I don't know—Mr. Regier? Mr. Endicott?

[**Mr. Ram Karran:** The Leader of the Opposition.]

**Mr. Burnham:** The Leader of the Opposition has always been personally responsible for his own entertainment.

Where in this Budget Statement, where in these Estimates do we find any appreciation by the Government of the importance of the educational system, the attempt to integrate it, the attempt to make it relevant to our circumstances, the attempt even to promise that there will be free secondary education? And this a socialist Government, a nationalist Government.

[**An Hon. Member:** College of Liberal Arts.]

**Mr. Burnham:** —Yes, the College of Liberal Arts with which I was just about to deal.

A provision of \$25,000 is made for a College of Liberal Arts. When it ventures into these fields, the Government always shows its further incompetence. First of all, most improperly the Minister of Education — and, unlike the civil servant, he enjoys no immunity here because he ought to have been in here — takes himself up and goes to Jamaica and says, "*We are withdrawing from the University College of the West Indies. We are setting up a College of Liberal Arts.*" My mother used to say, "*Fools never raise their thoughts so high.*" Is a College of Liberal Arts an alternative to sharing in a University? Any of the university men over there on the Government side would understand what I am talking about, and you don't have to be a university man to understand.

Of course, we welcome the establishment of a College of Liberal Arts, but this is not alternative to the university service. Has the Government got the means to set up immediately a University of Guiana? And even if you have the means to set up a University of Guiana, do you think, really, that the fullest education in its widest and truest sense can be got at a university based on a population of half a million only? I suppose the Hon. Minister of Communications will say, yes. Jesus said, "*Father forgive them.*" Have you got the staff for a College of Liberal Arts?

It is an excellent idea. The PNC agrees with that. The PNC agrees that in your College of Liberal Arts there should be an emphasis upon a broader type of education and a more relevant curriculum. We agree with all that. But why be so foolish as to think that because you vote \$25,000 for a

College of Liberal Arts you do not need the University? Where are you going to go? Throughout the world, institutions of higher learning are crammed to the hilt. We have an opportunity of participating so far as the running of this institution is concerned, an institution which has just got University status.

If there are criticisms of the University College of the West Indies—and there are justified criticisms, certainly, a contributory Government like ours can and should make those criticisms heard. And I have good reason to believe that the old fogies who, in the past, dominated the policy of the Council, will find themselves replaced by young, energetic, progressive and intelligent Council members. It would be and it is well within the bounds of possibility, that you will be able to change the emphasis of the University College of the West Indies.

This Government and the Minister are not Columbuses when they say that the University College of the West Indies is an English enclave on West Indian soil. That is a criticism which those of us who were there in England made at the time when the University College was being set up and Dr. Irvine was walking around lecturing. This criticism was made then that an attempt was about to be made to transfer Oxford to Mona, which we thought was bad. But the fact is: isn't it better to attempt to change the emphasis, attempt to bring pressure to bear? Formerly, you produced only one B.G. politician from the University College of the West Indies; where are you going to produce them from now – the University of Havana or the University of Heidelberg?

It seems to me that the Government's approach in this matter smacks of – I don't really want to say ignorance; I prefer to use a more parliamentary term. It smacks of an inability to appreciate the realities, and we are offering this criticism quite seriously. I concede from the very beginning that conditions, economic, particularly in British Guiana, are bad. I concede that whichever Government was in office would have found it difficult. The People's National Congress does not for one moment claim occult abilities. It does not suggest that you can wave a wand and all will be fair in the garden of Guiana.

But it seems to me, on the other hand, that the present Government is perhaps the worst Government that we can possibly have had in office at the present time. I say this not merely because of its ideology. I say this also because of its inability to grasp and grapple with the problems of the day, its inability to understand the world in which we live and the necessity that arises from time to time to do rather than to talk. Says the Hon. the Premier: *"We have a great deal of goodwill."* What has he done with that goodwill over the past five years? Says the Hon. the Premier: *"We have to contribute to our own development."* Agreed. But at the same time, by his policies, his attitude and the incompetence of his Government, he has not made it possible for there to be further taxable capital and income in the country for the purpose of making a contribution to the Development

Programme. Instead, what happens? His best supporters have exported their capital. One of them asked me if I would be prepared to take money out of the country. I said no, I would not agree.

[**Mr. Ram Karran:** Why did he ask you?]

**Mr. Burnham:** He heard I was leaving the country and he thought that I would be as disloyal as he and the other PPP supporters and Members.

This Government will obviously have to change its ways, and, if it has any sense of nationalism and patriotism left, if it does not want to change its ways, it should get out and make way for a more competent Government. To come here and ask for cooperation is easy, but how do the Members of the Government cooperate? Says the Hon. the Premier: "*If you come with sound propositions —*". Now, who is the judge of the soundness of the propositions? A man who for five years has not yet been able to set up an Economic Planning Unit; a man who has as his colleague an Hon. Premier who thinks that education is a social and unproductive service; a Premier who spends 50 percent of development on agriculture and 80 percent of that on rice—he is going to judge of the soundness of proposals from this side.

But if indeed his call for cooperation is a call for suggestions, we are prepared to give them. Many of them can be recognised from the criticism we have made of the administration of the programme. The PNC is very anxious that this country should get on. It is very anxious that the sharp division in our community today should be healed, but the PNC would like to emphasise this: that the way to heal this division is not for a Government self-righteously to accuse other persons of being either thieves or racialists.

In the first place may I observe that the PNC, which is not made up of illiterates and ignoramuses, has nothing to gain from racialism. Ask yourselves which party has something to gain — not the PNC nor the United Force. Therefore, if the People's Progressive Party, which is the Government, wants to talk about healing the breaches it must first do something to impress upon its supporters, satellites and lieutenants that although the particular ethnic group which supports the party is the majority, has more numbers, those more numbers cannot ride roughshod over the PNC numbers. I have said it privately and I say it publicly, that if 70 percent of the Greeks in Cyprus could not liquidate 30 percent of the Turks—do I need to continue?

The People's Progressive Party must also learn that we are so short of competent personnel that an effort must be made by the Government to employ the services of all Guianese in the fields in which they have ability or expertise. Do not spend your time abusing the businessmen. You can control them; you are the Government. When you are in power you do not have to abuse. Abuse is for the helpless, the weak. Businessmen cannot

milk this country any more. You are in office and you say you do not want the businessmen to milk this country any more, and it shall be so. Why cannot some encouragement be given to them to give their services and ability in the various State industries you propose to establish, and the various corporations you propose to set up, where they would be particularly useful? We are sufficiently short of good material for the Government at this stage to be so disinterested in making use of all the material we have available.

Finally, Bustamante, for whose politics I have no admiration, between whom and myself ideologically there is no bond, but whose commonsense and down-to-earthedness is worthy of admiration, once said at a meeting of West Indies students which I attended in London, when told about someone's brilliant qualifications in economics, "*Economics don't grow plantains.*" He may have overstated the proposition, but I think what this Government has to do is to stop being academic and get down to work. There are only three Ministers over there who show that they understand their portfolios, and whose ability is reflected in the competence and smooth running of their Departments. Of course we do not agree with one particular one, the Minister of Home Affairs. We feel that he is too active

[Laughter]

**Mr. Burnham:** But apart from those three Ministers, what do we have? We are regaled by all sorts of theories—what is socialism and what is happening in fields of which some Ministers know nothing. It seems to me that they must spend most of their time reading books when they should be getting on with their work. I do wish they would take a leaf out of the book of the Attorney-General, the Minister of Home Affairs, and the Minister of Labour, Health and Housing. We pay them fat salaries not to lecture on subjects they know nothing about, but to get on with the administration of this country. This Government must either mend its ways or yield to the inevitable.

There is a great deal of talking about the people finding out. It is said of some people that they are the only persons fit to be the wives of Caesar. The PPP has always told us over here "*One day the people will find out.*" It seems to me that one day the people are going to find out that the PPP is all mouth and nothing else. The Leaders of that Party promise the moon and the stars, but when they get in they cannot even pay the settlers at Black Bush Polder for the padi they produce and send to the central mills.

This Appropriation Bill, in spite of my remarks and observations, will be passed. In any case they have numbers, but even if they did not have numbers, we do not want to embarrass them any further by preventing them from being able to get on with the work of Government. But passing the Appropriation Bill is not the be-all and-end-all. I am not a schoolmaster by inclination or profession, but for five years we have been talking to them,

and I hope that now that British Guiana is moving towards Independence they will hearken and understand;

- (1) that they are not the only patriots,
- (2) that they have no monopoly of intelligence, and
- (3) that Independence means hard work and less airy politicking.

## Suspension of Grenada Constitution: 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** A few days ago, when I got the information that the Constitution of Grenada was suspended, and before it was announced over the radio, though there was an embargo on the news, on behalf of the People's National Congress, I forward a cable to the Secretary of State for the Colonies protesting the suspension of Island's Constitution. It seems to me that there could be no justification whatsoever for the suspension of a country's Constitution. The position bears no analogy to the passage in the Scriptures about the "*Lord giveth and the Lord taketh*"

Whether one agrees with Mr. Gairy's policy or his actions during his terms of office or not, the Constitution does not belong to Mr. Gairy. The Constitution belongs to Grenada, and Heaven knows it is not a sufficiently progressive Constitution. I am a little disappointed to hear Members of this House seeking to make themselves cautious apologists for the colonial power, saying that the British Government's actions may be right and they may be wrong. To my mind, regardless of some of the inanities uttered by the Hon. Member of Essequibo Islands, this is so important a principle that the British Government, in these circumstances, can never be right.

To say that the law reserves to Her Majesty in Council power to revoke, amend or alter the Constitution is irrelevant. It is a formality. After all, the people of Grenada are entitled to govern themselves, and after Britain has grudgingly granted them some of their God-given rights I do not see why she should have arrogated to herself an allegedly God-given power to take even the little the people of Grenada had.

My friend, the Hon. Member for Campbellville, Mr. Bissember, has alluded to some of the inconsistencies of conduct to be found in the Government. I shall be satisfied with observing that while the Hon. Member for Essequibo Islands, Mr. Bhagwan, speaking obviously on behalf of his Party, expressed profound regret at the suspension of the Grenada Constitution, he is a Member of the Party which keeps in being an Emergency Order as a potential threat against the democratic rights of the people of this country, and continues this Emergency Order for quick use, it claims, against whom I know not. It is the same Government which has refused to hold a by-election in Houston; it is the same Government that refuses to give the people of Houston an opportunity to express their choice at the polls. It is not sufficient to say that suspension of the Constitution differs from a refusal to hold elections. There may be a difference but it is a difference of degree, but certainly not of kind, and perhaps the People's Progressive Party, the Government for the time being, may well take this skeleton out of its cupboard and decide to make some gesture of democracy by having the Houston by-election held, and the *ultra vires* Emergency Order lifted.

It, therefore, appears to me that it is hardly sufficient to express "*deep concern and profound regret at the action of Her Majesty's Government in the suspension of the Constitution of the Island of Grenada*", and then piously go home patting ourselves on the back and saying that we have done a fine thing. I feel that this expression of concern and profound regret should be communicated to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, and to that end I beg to move an Amendment to add a second resolve clause to read:

*"And be it further resolved: That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies."*

## Second Reading of the National Development Saving Levy Bill: 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** No one in his right senses will deny the necessity for the people of Guiana in one form or another to make a contribution to the development of the country. No one, unless he is purblind, would suggest that this country can improve its economic condition by largess from abroad, even if that largess were forthcoming. The Hon. Minister of Finance did quote as his authority Professor Arthur Lewis for the proposition that there was a necessity to increase the rate of accumulation of capital. All of these things we agree with, but it does not follow that we agree with what I would call the Compulsory Savings Bill.

Reference has already been made to the fact that India did not accept Kaldor's recommendations; Ceylon did not accept Kaldor's recommendations; Russia abolished compulsory savings, and in one other country the Government of which suffered from a similar naïveté or temerity as the PPP, Ghana, there were a number of riots. Of course some trade unionists were thrown into gaol, but our present Government does not have a sufficiently widespread popularity or strength to attempt to throw anyone in gaol for several reasons. In the circumstances, this bit of legislation, apart from being objectionable in principle, is politically inexpedient and stupid.

As the Leader of the Party which is opposed to the PPP, it is hardly my role to advise the PPP against committing political suicide. The principle to which the members of my Party are opposed is the compulsion. This type of authoritarian approach to matters economic is foreign to our tradition and background and beliefs. Furthermore, we are all the more opposed to this authoritarianism because the PPP or the Members of the PPP have by statements given us the impression that this is the thin edge of the wedge, and may well result eventually in a completely authoritarian regime.

### [Interruption]

**Mr. Burnham:** Notwithstanding the remark by the Hon. Minister of "*Wit and Humour*"—I am sorry, Sir, I should have said the Hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics, I would say that objectively one may understand why the Government had to introduce the element of compulsion, but one still cannot agree to it.

I do not take seriously the answer given by the Hon. Minister of Finance before the recent Commission of Inquiry that it was made compulsory because Mr. Kaldor, a Polish émigré recently naturalized and made a British citizen, advised him. I think that was due to one of his flights of forgetfulness, and he was not quite sure of himself at the time. The real reason for introducing the compulsory element in this measure springs from

the fact that his Government has been unable to induce Guianese by persuasion, precept and example to make a direct contribution of this sort.

A great deal has been said on this matter, and there is no need for me to repeat things like the inability of this Government to raise loans, or to get substantial economic assistance outside of this country. I prefer to emphasize the fact that, even in British Guiana, this Government has created an atmosphere of lack of confidence. It makes absolutely no sense, and there is no logic behind such accusations—it is no use telling about being unfairly criticised.

Let us, for instance, examine what has happened in this House over the past two days. The Hon. Member for Corentyne Central was at pains to show, instead of concentrating on the merits or demerits of this Bill, that the economy of Canada had reached a sorry position because it was tied to the American economy. I am not an academician; I am not an expert; I am not an economist.

[**Mr. Ram Karran:** What are you?]

**Mr. Burnham:** I am a simple man, and I believe in the applicability of the meaningfulness of the advice: "*Shoemaker stick to your last*". But what impression does the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Natural Resources give to those listening to him and to those who have read? That in only one part of the world do you find one economy tied to another. He does not even have the sense to recognise that in Eastern Europe you have economic satellites of the largest economic power, USSR.

If one read the recent edition of *Polish Facts and Figures*, one would see that in Poland a recession has taken place. You will find, therefore, that automatically the impression is conveyed: in spite of the fact that the PPP is talking about neutrality, it is only neutral in one direction—it is like a child who wants the bigger half of the apple.

In the circumstances, the Members of the PPP will have to be realistic and honest if they want to spend their time pointing out the weakness of the West while apologising for the East. They have to realise that any rational being will assume their attachment to the economic and political ideology of the Eastern Bloc.

Therefore do not be offended when you are called a communist; do not be offended in these circumstances when you are unable to get substantial assistance in the West; do not be offended when people in these circumstances assume that a measure like this is aimed at ultimate confiscation and that there is likely to be no repayment of the savings.

Reference has been made to the flight of capital. In spite of the explanations by the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources, I must also make reference to the fact that Members and supporters of the People's Progressive Party were unwilling to subscribe or help in the subscription to the loan of \$2½ million which was raised last year.

[An Hon. Member: An old record]

**Mr. Burnham:** Of course, it may be an old record, but I have been taught by a master – the Premier. The books from which he quotes have dog-ears by now.

As I was saying it is no answer for the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources to say that the letter which he wrote as Chairman of the People's Progressive Party on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1962, to Party Group Secretaries and activists deploring the fact that they did not subscribe to the loan or encourage people to subscribe was merely a progress of education. They do not have to be educated in that sense. They were sufficiently sophisticated and educated to give several bags of rice to the PPP to help the PPP to win the Elections. After they had helped the PPP to win the Elections by giving rice which they could ill afford, what further education do they need with respect to subscribing to loans? It seems that they saw as great difference between emotional attachment to the People's Progressive Party for reasons which we all know – but we need not open the old sore – and their basic economic interests, and though they would give some padi to see a certain slogan in the ascendancy, they are not prepared to give money or subscribe to a loan because they are unsure of the direction in which this Government is going.

But, apart for the lack of confidence, there is the incompetence of this Government.

[Mr. Ram Karran: Another record.]

**Mr. Burnham:** Most of the quips and maxims come from people like Demosthenes and Aristotle but they are still true, and the incompetence of the People's Progressive Party still remains a fact in spite of constant repetition on my part. You have a Government whose Premier goes into a witness box and says "*I was forced to say what I did not mean*". You have a Government whose Minister of Finance on the 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1962, told us that the Gross Domestic Product at factor cost of this country is estimated for 1961 at \$245 million, and when he was asked it in the witness box, he said he did not know. You have a Government whose Minister of Finance in a witness box says he does not know anything about the falling of the property market. There were so many things he did not know that if it were my privilege to cross-examine him, I would have asked him what he did know.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Burnham:** This is not intended to be humorous, facetious or witty. What impression does the world get when you have a Government of this kind, when a Minister of Finance, asked questions on subjects within his

portfolio, has to spend time asking the Commission to permit the adviser to tell him what he ought to know? You have a Government today whose Minister of Finance does not know the approximate national income *per capita*. You have a Government today that is using loan funds for recurrent expenditure.

In these circumstances, the incompetence is palpable, and people—even if they are not afraid of the ideology of the People's Progressive Party, or even if they know that, whatever the People's Progressive Party may have in mind to Cubanize or otherwise change this country, the latter cannot be done because of the strength of the forces opposed to it—still fear to invest their money or lend voluntarily because they are not sure that the Government can make proper use of it. The answer, therefore, is to inspire confidence and increase competence. Let your criterion in preferment not be Party loyalty or the willingness of the particular individual or individuals to accept with the docility of a sheep whatever is said of the Leader. But let it be the competence of the persons or individuals to do the job they are given to do.

Who would willingly want to lend money to this Government – I am talking about the local situation – for development, when at one time you hear Premier saying that the Development Programme has its great faults because it was thrown upon this country by Berrill, and at another time you hear Berrill being referred to as an authority? There is this unsureness about everything. It all points to the fact that the present Development Programme has not been carefully thought out and, as has been pointed out by Newman – in spite of the fact that Newman was not invited by this Government to give his opinion—no provision has been made for overhauling or changing the Programme. There has been no real plan.

There are the things, apart from the professed ideology of the Government, that leave it in the position where it has to introduce authoritarian measures. Consequently, though we can see why it is driven to introduce a compulsory savings scheme, we cannot agree, because the fault is basically the Government's. If its Members had conducted themselves differently there would have been no necessity for this. Is it not strange that there are emergent territories which were economically backward which have been able to increase their capital formation, which have been able to limit conspicuous consumption without the introduction of a Compulsory Savings Bill? As I said before, the only explanation the Hon. Minister of Finance can give for its being made compulsory was the fact that Mr. Kaldor recommended it, which is itself the very epitome in incompetence.

Let us examine the Bill itself – not the details, but the details only so far as they reflect or tend to reflect certain principles. Why is there a distinction between emoluments over \$5,000 and income over \$5,000 that does not come from being employed? What is the *raison d'être*? Instead of launching into a long polemic on all sorts of economic abstractions understood neither by

the preacher nor the congregation, why didn't the Minister of Finance give us the advantage of knowing the reason for this distinction?

To my mind, there can be no *raison d'être* that can appeal to the reason. Let us put it this way: take a Bookers' Director – a Bookers' Director can have just one share, for the transfer of which he signs a blank until they are ready to get rid of him.

[**Mr. Ram Karran:** Do you have any?]

**Mr. Burnham:** Not yet. I was hoping to purchase shares in the New Guiana Company if it was democratically run. As I was saying, the position with respect to a Bookers' Director that would be arrived at would be this: he works for much more than \$5,000, but since he is employed, he contributes 5 percent on the excess over \$3,600. But I, self-employed, if I am fortunate enough to earn more than \$5,000 per annum, have to contribute 10 percent on the excess over \$5,000. What is the reason for this? You know what is the reason? Kaldor suggested it. That is all, and it is applicable in Guiana.

In this Budget Speech on the 31<sup>st</sup> January, the Minister of Finance said that this scheme was expected to yield \$6 million per annum, and in his Statement on April 3, what with the revision, upward, it would yield approximately only \$4 million per annum. Then, somewhere he puts in a statement—I want to be perfectly accurate and I quote from paragraph 97 of the Budget Speech of the 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1962—that:

*“...it is a simple alternative to a universal contributory pension scheme, and that the Government might transform it into a more elaborate pension scheme at a later date.”*

What does that mean—an alternative to a pension scheme? This cannot be an alternative to a pension scheme because in a pension scheme, the contributors get a direct advantage from the very beginning. There is no direct advantage at this point. We were being persuaded that there will be the indirect advantage of an increase of our productivity, increased accumulation of capital and, therefore, increased economic prosperity. The history of this Government so far as such has to persuade us that this is going to happen, because it does not know how to spend money profitably. It is so bright—may I digress for a moment—it cannot get money from America, but every day its Members run to America for money. Unless it is to meet Felix Cummings, I cannot see the reason for these trips.

The Members of the Government say this is an alternative to a pension scheme. It is not. It cannot be equated with a pension scheme. A lot of talk is when their *mala fides* is highlighted, but this is what the Hon. Minister of Finance went on to say: the Government might transform it into a more elaborate pension scheme later. The Hon. Member for Demerara Coast East,

Mr. Rai, says that there is no such intention so far as he thinks – I do not think; I was not there. If I were to express definite knowledge, it would be an admission that I am guilty of what I was accused of by the Hon. Attorney-General some time ago of having access to Cabinet files. But all this gives colour to the point of view expressed by the Hon. Member for Demerara Coast East and the fears expressed by Hon. Members like the one for Georgetown Central.

Some of us would like to be millionaires, but there is a limitation to such dreams. If the Government was really interested in a pension scheme, or in a national health scheme, it should have got down to work long ago. It was in 1954 that the Report of the Richardson Commission was published, and it was in that year that a contributory pension scheme and/or national health scheme was first discussed. The PPP used it as part of its platform when the Richardson Commission came out, and there was a headline in *Thunder* "Too Little And Too Late." I was then a Member of the Executive of the People's Progressive Party like the Hon. Member for Demerara Coast East, Mr. Rai, and we all committed the *faux pas*, and clearly it was adumbrated as part of the policy of the Party that there should be a national contributory pension scheme and/or a national health insurance scheme.

I know that we will perhaps be told that we cannot get a national pension scheme now because a great deal of data has to be collected and collated, but if I concede that, I would also like to observe that if this Government has been really serious about it, it had since 1957 to get the ground-work done, but of course Members of the Government prefer to spend their time politicking. That is really disheartening – they are a different Party from ours, it is true; their ideology is repulsive to us. That is true, but after all they are Guianese, as we are embarrassed, as I was embarrassed when a certain gentleman was in the witness box. I am embarrassed by incompetence on the part of Guianese, and I am all the more stunned when I realise that as a result of their failure to do basic things the country as a whole suffers.

But let us assume that Government does intend at some time to introduce a national contributory pension scheme. We have had no indication so far that it is getting down to the investigation which is necessary. Members of the Government are always full of words, wise phrases, and wild phrases too, but there is never the proof of their being practical. Where is the indication if, on the 31<sup>st</sup> January, the Minister of Finance was able to say that it was hoped that this might be transformed into a more elaborate pension scheme? He certainly had an opportunity then, and since then, to give this House an indication of what preparations are being made. It took the Trade Union Congress to force upon the Government a certain Amendment, that these Bonds should be used as contributions to any national insurance or pension scheme that may be subsequently instituted. That is a sop to Cerberus, but it is not proof of the fact that Government has thought out the implications of this measure.

I cannot see how a pension scheme can be introduced in a hurry at the rate things are going. I cannot see how this compulsory levy –this taxation, because a levy is a tax, according to the Oxford Dictionary –

[**Mr. Mann:** Nonsense.]

**Mr. Burnham:** I yield pride of place to the Hon. the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Finance on matters historical, but not etymological. As I was saying, since a contributory pension scheme is not around the corner, is not there in the foreseeable future, and since at the same time we have no guarantee that this money will be effectively used by the Government, we have a practical reason for opposing this measure.

In fact it is the PNC supporters who are going to have to pay for it, because they are the sitting ducks, and we have a Government which charges \$1.50 for a radio licence and \$1 for a rice factory. Do you, therefore, blame us for opposing this measure? The Hon. Member for Demerara Coast East said that if a free vote were taken this Bill would be lost. He knows what he is saying, and regardless of what the Hon. Member for Essequibo Islands, Mr. Bhagwan, may humorously remark, that is absolutely true. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that if you have four Members on the Government Benches who will vote for this Bill on a free vote, you have many Ministers (I am not going to specify their portfolios), Parliamentary Secretaries and backbenchers who are all opposed to it.

It is time, therefore, that this Government, instead of attempting to railroad this measure, take time off to recognise that there is a majority opinion even in its own Party against this Bill, and a majority opinion in the country. But I am sufficiently politically educated to know that none of them will get up here and speak against the Bill, because that is what a political Party exists for—you have to vote as the Party dictates, otherwise the Party will disintegrate. You have to vote against your conscience sometimes. If you can come out, as the Hon. Member for Demerara Coast East has done

[**Mr. Benn:** He was kicked out.]

**Mr. Burnham:** What is the purpose of pursuing this measure today? It is going to breed more hostility, more uneasiness and greater opposition to the Government.

I am now appealing to the Government as a politician, showing it that it is politically unwise not only for the Government but also in the larger interests of the country. At the moment when we cannot balance our recurrent expenditure, when we have to borrow money from Her Majesty's Government to pay civil servants; at the moment when everything seems to be going to shambles, is this Government going to create more worry for itself by pushing this measure through? We grant Government

the face-saving device of saying publicly that it thinks this measure is good, but in the present mood of the country it is inadvisable to pursue it.

I do not want to be extravagant in my prophecies as the Hon. Member for Demerara Coast East, to say that things like these can lead to civil commotion, but one can see the logic behind the statement of the Hon. Member, because there are certain people who are not going to pay this levy, and a Government is as effective as the people it governs permit. As an instance, there was a Proclamation forbidding processions around these Public Buildings, but there were 30,000 people marching in procession, and that will be done again and again. Let us be realistic. In India, for instance, I understand there is no Compulsory Saving Act, but the Government has been able to persuade the greater part of the Civil Service to make their contributions by buying Savings Bonds. Can't this Government try it? Is it so afraid that it has antagonized its own employees so much that it cannot persuade them? Can't this Government mend its ways and try to instill confidence? I am afraid that if the Government persists—it has the numbers to carry it—it will further divide the country, and will create so much unrest, so much more unrest, that the game will not be worth the candle.

Let us learn from our most recent experience. On the 31<sup>st</sup> January the Budget was promulgated and there were all sorts of things this Government had hoped to get out of the budgetary provisions—so many millions of dollars here and there. Whatever sparked off the disturbances on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> February; whoever was responsible for putting a match to the first building, it has to be conceded that as a result of that Budget there has been so much devastation in the commercial areas of the City of Georgetown that import duties are going to be much less than what the Government anticipated, or even what it collected last year.

It is no sense being haughty or stubborn in one direction. It is a question of seeing facts. If you persist with this, what may come in the train of this provision, which you want to pass by ten o'clock tonight, may prevent you from reaping the so-called benefits which you think you will get from it, and the country will be put further back. There is no doubt that our country is further back today than when the Hon. Minister of Finance spoke in this House at 2.20 p.m. on Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1962. Let us learn.

This afternoon I have been adopting a conciliatory attitude. I have not been particularly hostile. I have been showing the weakness in this measure and in the Government's attitude, but I and those for whom I speak will not remain forever peaceful and conciliatory. Therefore I would suggest to the Members of the Government that they should withdraw this Bill or defer it for further consideration, or I am sure they will reap the whirlwind.

Quite frankly, none of us can benefit from the Government reaping the whirlwind. No one really wins; some of us may reap more than other. We will only give the impression of our division to the outside world. Those

who do not want Independence would like it, because it would strengthen their argument against Independence. I want to hear what the Government has to say, but I can assure it that so far as the PNC is concerned it is opposed to the Bill in principle and in detail. It is unsympathetic to the Bill so far as the reasons given, real or imaginary, are concerned.

If the Government introduces a proper insurance scheme and works out the details, it will get the support of the PNC. But the Members of the PNC are convinced that there is no logical basis, measure, and that there is a great deal in the fears expressed that this is the first attempt at confiscatory legislation contemplated by the present Government.

## West Coast Berbice Road: 20<sup>th</sup> July, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** I did not propose to enter into this discussion originally, but it was forced upon me by some of the remarks of the Hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics - some offensive remarks - and also by the fact that he seems to speak for a shameless Government. Let me remind the House of a few things. On the 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1956, there appeared an article in the *Thunder* which is the organ of the PPP Government, the Party in power at the moment. That article was critical of the condition of the East Coast Road, and a statement was made to the following effect:

*"The road has been allowed to deteriorate because there was an Interim Government not representative of the people and not elected by the voters, but if a Party like the PPP, sensitive to the wishes of the electorate were to be put in office, the condition of the road would have been improved."*

About a year after, in February, 1957, an article in similar terms was written in *Thunder*, the official organ of the PPP. It is in that context I feel we must consider the condition of the East Coast Road. I am going to assume for argument's sake that the looting which took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> February, 1962, is reasonable for the depleted coffers of this Government at the moment, though I am not accepting it. But February, 1962, was nearly five years for the PPP in office. The PPP came back into office in 1961, after being there from 1957 and, so far as we were informed or were made aware by the Government, there was no shortage of funds, there was no looting and, consequently, that excuse cannot be made for failure to get ready money in 1962.

Anyone who like myself and the Hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics who has travelled over this road must agree that the road has deteriorated steadily between 1957 and 1962 until it is now a morass masquerading as a road. It seems therefore that though it may be a facile answer to ascribe the present condition of the road to the rain following dry spells; though it may be easy to suggest that the failure of the communities which abut the public road in West Coast Berbice, to keep their drainage in order in some measure is responsible for the condition of the road, this is really a debating point and it is not showing the seriousness which we would expect from Government, the organ of which in 1956 and 1957 recognized the poor condition of the East Coast Road.

If this road has been properly done, the alleged failure of Hopetown and other places to look after their drainage would not have affected the road. You would have a solid road which would be immune from what it is alleged takes place in these villages. When you leave the road which passes through the constituency of Berbice which is not represented by the

PPP, how do you explain the deterioration of the road between Mahaica and Mahaicony? The condition there is not less bad than the West Coast Road, Berbice. Can you say that that is due to failure on the part of communities to look after their drainage properly? It seems to me that what has happened in this Government is that it has never settled down to a scale of priorities so far as the different services of Public Works are concerned. It seems to me that if the Government had any sense it would have had the maintenance, building and resurfacing of the East Coast Road as high priority, because indeed and in fact it is the only artery for the people who live on the East Coast and people coming from far-off Corentyne. How can Government explain the condition of the Corentyne Road?

It seems to me that Government cannot explain the reason for the deterioration of this road, and it is now suggesting that it is due to flooding from adjoining villages or the villages abutting the road. Let the Government be honest and say that it had forgotten about the roads in considering the scale of priorities. Let it say that it had no policy with respect to roads. We are told that it could get money to do a certain type of resurfacing between Cove and John and Golden Grove until it can get an enormous sum of money to build a new road.

Like children waiting for Father Christmas, Members of the Government fold their arms, went to bed early, and waited at the bottom of the chimney for Father Christmas to give them a present of \$13 million instead of doing their best with what they had. I see a certain sign being made by the Hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics, and I read those signs from the illiterate—I am not saying that the Minister is illiterate.

My contention is this: if there had been a scheme or policy over the past five years to resurface this road and maintain it, the conditions which exist now would not have existed. May I just for a moment allude to the suggestion that it was bad drainage in the villages that is responsible for this bad condition of the road. Certainly, it is this incompetent Government that cannot use its powers to see that the drainage of these areas is looked after. If its allegation is true and if it has no power to compel, is it incompetent to have legislation passed to give it the power? That is the most stupid answer or suggestion that can be made by a Government whose Deputy Premier gets at the street corners and tells the public: "*We have the power of life and death over you*". You have the power of life and death over them, but you do not have the power or ability to keep the main artery properly maintained.

## Conditions of Employment on Coastal Ships: 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** I have reason to believe that this Motion, like the previous one, is not likely to elicit controversy, and it is to the effect that the Legislative Assembly recommends to Government the appointment of an Advisory Committee under section 7 of the Labour Ordinance to investigate the conditions of employment on coastal ships and to make recommendations as to the minimum rates of wages which should be payable.

The Hon. Minister and the House are both no doubt aware of the provisions of Section 7 of Chapter 103. In these circumstances, I would understand it to be the Minister of Labour, Health and Housing – the power to regulate wages in any industry or amongst any category of workers after there has been the appointment of an Advisory Committee and there has been a receipt by the Government of advice from such Advisory Committee. In Trinidad and Barbados, there exists a Minimum Wage Order so far as this category of workers is concerned.

The conditions on these ships as have been brought to my attention by an organisation which represents these men to some extent – the Coastal Maritime Association – are very bad. There is no fixed rate of wages and in many cases, the vessels themselves are under-staffed. Men have had to work 24 hours a day, without any rest or recreation, when out of port – Georgetown, to be precise – and 8 hours a day when in the port of Georgetown. Furthermore, there are instances where men are paid according to a trip, and this trip never ends until there is an unloading of the cargo brought by the particular vessel. I know of one occasion on which a vessel had brought in stone could not unload because there had been a breakdown of the crusher at the site at which the stone was brought, and the men were not paid for the trip. If they were paid hourly, in that particular instance there might have been some extenuating circumstances, and they would have earned more, but they were paid by the trip and had to wait several hours until the crusher was repaired before they could unload the stone.

There are many instances where these men live under primitive and barbarous conditions on board these vessels, and in many cases they have to supply themselves with meals, and the cooking facilities are on the prehistoric side. I had an opportunity to speak to the Minister of Labour on this matter, and the information which he gave me leads me to feel that there is no need to make heavy weather about it, because he accepts the principle. In the circumstances I shall merely move the Motion as it stands in my name.

## Motion on Government's Retrenchment Policy: 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** On the 29<sup>th</sup> June, 1961, in the Legislative Council a Motion was moved by the then Member for Berbice River, Mr. Ajodha Singh, who, fortunately or unfortunately, is not with us in this House today. The words of that Motion were as follows:

*"Whereas during the month of May, 1961, two hundred and ninety workers or Plantation Port Mourant were retrenched;*

*And whereas this retrenchment has led to a sharp increase in unemployment in the area particularly and in the country generally:*

*And whereas the employers of these workers claim that the retrenchment was necessitated by the need to mechanize the sugar industry and to stabilize their labour force;*

*And whereas the policy of retrenchment is being pursued on many sugar estates in this colony;*

*Be it resolved: That this Council records its grave concern at the retrenchment of the workers of Plantation Port Mourant and other sugar estates, and urges the Government to consider what steps should be taken to prevent a repetition of such acts which tend to dislocate the economy of the country, and which bring about hardship and misery to many families."*

During the course of the debate on that Motion an Amendment was moved by the then Member for Georgetown North (Mr. Jackson) who, unfortunately, I will say categorically, is not with us today. The Amendment, as moved by that Hon. Member, was to this effect:

*"Be it resolved that this Council records its grave concern at the retrenchment of the workers in every field of enterprise and Government, and urges the Government to consider what steps should be taken to prevent a repetition of such acts which tend to dislocate the economy of the country, and which bring about hardship and misery to many families."*

This Amendment is recorded at column 1960 of the *Hansard* for Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> June, 1961. The debates on that Motion and the Amendment were subsequently quoted on Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1961. The *magnus opus* from the Government's side was delivered by the then Minister and present Minister of Natural Resources, and the accused –

That is true, Sir, but certain Latin phrases may be used at some time.

[An Hon. Member: Explain the phrase.]

**Mr. Burnham:** With all due respect to you, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to explain such simple terms which should form part of any civilized man's vocabulary. The debate was concluded in July, 1961, and strangely enough the Government of the day rejected the Amendment which referred to the retrenchment of Government employees. The Hon. Minister of Natural Resources pointed out that there should be no comparison between retrenchment in the Government Services and retrenchment in the sugar industry. It was a little difficult then to understand what was the difference between retrenchment in one industry and retrenchment in another, and it is still difficult for me to understand what was the distinction which the Hon. Minister, Mr. Benn, sought on Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1961, to make.

That Amendment, as I said before, was rejected. Of course, during the course of the debate an accusation was made that those who did not see eye to eye with the Government's rejection were defenders of sugar. The Party in power, thereafter, through one of its back benchers, since last year showed great solicitude for those workers and the families who had been affected by the retrenchment in the sugar industry, and at the same time showed a callous disregard for the misery, suffering and hardship of those who have been affected by the retrenchment in the Government Services. It is surprising, therefore, in the circumstances that Government has embarked upon a policy of retrenchment in the Government Services.

I would say that Government's solicitude for the workers was merely a political gimmick. I do not wish to be ruthlessly frank about it, but I have no desire to pull any punches or to don the silken glove. But there seems to be a callous reason on the part of the Government; it would appear that not a large number of its Party supporters are to be found in the ranks of the Government Services – skilled or unskilled, classified or unclassified, and it does not care what hardship and suffering these people have to undergo.

It has been somewhat difficult to fix the exact number of persons who have been retrenched as a result of this new policy of retrenchment. But from the figures which I have at my disposal, which figures I am reliably informed are on the conservative side, over 470 have already been retrenched, and over 268 will be retrenched by the end of August, 1962. I understand that 200 will be retrenched, for instance, on the East Bank Road Programme; 368 were retrenched from the Sea Defences on the East Coast, Demerara; 68 retrenched from the Sea Defences on the West Coast Demerara; 30 on the Essequibo Coast; 4 retrenched from the West Coast Berbice Road Programme, and 120 to be retrenched from the Bartica/Parika Road Development Programme by the 15<sup>th</sup> August.

This type of retrenchment is the result of a deliberate policy by a Government which claims to be working-class and which claims to be socialist.

Let us examine further some of these implications. Some of the workers who have been retrenched are on the unclassified list. Some of them have been employed by Government for 7 years or more, and in such cases they

will be entitled to gratuities calculated on the basis of their salaries and years of service. But these gratuities will amount in most cases to a few hundred dollars—a mere pittance so far as a man and his family are concerned. Others who have not been employed by the Government for 7 years or more—indeed the majority of them, I understand, are employees who have between 2 and 5 years' service—will not be entitled to gratuities, and in these circumstances they will be put on the road without even the pittance of gratuities being made available to them.

It is to be observed that Guillebaud in his Report recommended that, in instances of this type where men were being retrenched and not being dismissed for any fault on their part, they should be given severance pay. But, significantly, this is one of Guillebaud's recommendations which has not been accepted, adopted or implemented by this so-called socialist Government—this Government the Premier of which goes to the United Nations and makes a false representation that this Party is based on the working-class.

Now, *pari passu* with this policy of retrenchment in the unclassified and unfixed services, one finds that a Minister has exercised his powers under the Audit Ordinance on October, 1961, to limit the Recurrent Estimates to 90 percent of the sum approved by the Government and accepted by this House. In fact, a Circular has gone around from the Secretary to the Treasury on the instructions of the Hon. Minister of Finance that vacancies must not be filled in the Service, except in very rare cases such as arise where there are acting appointments. Every Department is expected to save a minimum of 10 percent on what was voted for it in this House. No amount of sophistry, no amount of spacious argument can convince us on this side that there is justification for the retrenchment, or for the failure to fill vacancies in the various Departments.

The Government has offered the excuse from time to time that this policy of retrenchment has been made necessary as a result of its having to withdraw some of the Budget proposals. But I shall wait for the Members of the Government to repeat that allegation and relate it more fully. May I observe *en passant* that the reduction that has followed from the withdrawal of certain proposals in the Budget is not such as to fail to leave enough in the coffers to cover the Recurrent Estimates - the reduction in the Budget Speech which was delivered on the 31<sup>st</sup> January, concerned a contribution from revenue to the Development Programme. The reduction, according to the two Budget Speeches we have had here from the Hon. Minister of Finance, would not have affected Recurrent Estimates and Recurrent Expenditure.

Many of those persons who have been retrenched have been retrenched from services that are serviced from the Recurrent Estimates. Further, if you say a large number, that will be as far as my conscience permits. A large number of them have been retrenched from Development Works or works undertaken under the Development Programme. But the point is that many of those so retrenched are persons whose permanent appointments

or employment were under the Recurrent Estimates, and they were merely seconded to Developmental Works.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Burnham:** They have not been brought back in spite of the suggestion which is being made by the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Natural Resources *sotto voce*; they have not been brought back to do work under the Recurrent Estimates.

Whether it is dismissal or retrenchment, it is known that in two ways these people have been dismissed and retrenched, and they are not connected either with basic employment or actual employment with Development Works. Perhaps it is not a mere coincidence that this retrenchment has not taken place in Mon Repos. Why was it necessary to retrench these people? The Government has not been able to explain publicly the reason for the retrenchment in detail. A 10 percent of the Recurrent Estimates will amount to \$5 million. Government asked us to vote \$50 million; it wants to save 10 percent of that, and it is still dismissing people separate and apart from the 10 percent saving. If you accept that and say that the majority of those dismissed are those who were originally employed on the Development Programme which is to be curtailed, what is supposed to happen to the \$5.6 million which Government is going to save by the end of this year?

To my mind –

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Burnham:** It is many years since I have given up the position of pedagogue, and I do not propose to enter upon it again for the benefit of the Minister of Works and Hydraulics. To my mind, therefore, it is nothing but a callous disregard for certain sections of the working-class, amongst which the People's Progressive Party – the Government Party – has little or no support.

**[Mr. Benn:** That is what you believe.]

**Mr. Burnham:** This is not a question of belief. This is a question of fact as disclosed by the results of the last Election. It seems to me, therefore, that this Government is pursuing a policy of victimization in the way that if it wants to execute any savings for any purpose, the first people on whom the hatchet is going to fall are the people who did not vote for it.

This did not start after the fatal week beginning Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> February, 1962. This started way back in 1961 and was alluded to in the remarks made by the then Hon. Member for Georgetown Central on Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> June, 1961. This retrenchment which is going on now is a mere carry-over

of something that started way back last year. Representations have been made by the trade unions, but of course we have it off record, both before the Inquiry Commission which sat in Georgetown, and the Committee of Seventeen of the United Nations, that the trade unions in this country are servants of the capitalists; they are reactionary, according to the Government. Perhaps that would explain why the representations of the trade unions have been ignored.

I understand that the Government has made a proposal for four days' work a week instead of the usual five and one-half days' work. That too, is unsatisfactory, and it seems to me that a Government that studies the welfare of the working-class, if it is serious and if, in fact, it does have to make savings, should seek some other sector from which savings should be made and the working-class people should not be the first people to suffer. What is the difference in attitude between this Government and its predecessor in office? Shall we be kind to it and say its predecessor in office but one? In the colonial context and atmosphere, only those at the bottom must suffer – not those at the top, if necessary. When the handouts are to be made or alms given, the top gets them first and the bottom gets them last.

In those circumstances, I am moving this Motion. I shall not be very much longer at this stage. I shall await, with interest, whatever reply will be given to the hard fact that over 700 men, with wives and families, have been retrenched or are soon to be retrenched with no alternative avenues of employment. I shall await the answer; I shall await the reason; I shall wait to see which sophist from the other side can explain these hard facts away and justify them in the present context of Guiana.

**Mr. Burnham:** (*Replying*) We have been told in moving this Motion I did not attempt to analyse the cause of the retrenchment. It seems to me that we do not understand our respective roles in this House, if that accusation was seriously meant. Those of us on this side of the House are not in the Government. It is not, therefore, for us to be in a position to say why a policy has been adopted. It is not for us to attempt to be psychic, to enter into the dark recesses of the minds of the Members of the Government. It is for us to listen to them, and for them to justify the adoption of the new policy. There seems to have been a certain amount of confusion amongst the Members of the Government, for at one time we were told by the Minister of Works and Hydraulics, Mr. Ram Karran, that retrenchment was not an apt term, or the correct term; it really was not retrenchment. However, at least one Member of the Government, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Mann, did not adopt the word "*retrenchment*", and the Minister of Finance has, by his proposed Amendment, accepted that there is a policy of retrenchment, and has in fact agreed that this policy of retrenchment should be reversed as soon as the budgetary position permits.

Well, it means that we have certain admission with which I am satisfied, but you will permit me to deal with some of the *non sequiturs* and irrelevancies which have been introduced into this debate. However learned the distinction may appear to be between private employer and Government as an employer, it is not really relevant to this question: we are dealing with facts of life, facts of misery, facts of hunger, facts of “*white corners*”. Those are the things we are dealing with. We are not interested in being entertained by these nice distinctions between private employees and public employees. We are calling upon the Government in this Motion to do something to alleviate the suffering and to end the misery consequent upon the retrenchment by the 15<sup>th</sup> of August of over 1,000 Government employees. Nor does it prove anything in favour of the Government to refer glibly to the fact that in Water Street and other sectors of private enterprise and industry there has been retrenchment. This is similar to the thief who takes solace from the fact that there are other thieves.

We are not really interested in whether there has been retrenchment in private industry. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to compel private industry to do something about the retrenchment because *a priori* from the dissertations we have had from the other side of the House, private enterprise is not interested in the welfare of its employees, and if, therefore, the philosophy and approach of private employers are different from the philosophy, or what ought to be the philosophy, and approach of the Government it is ridiculous to refer to certain things being done by private enterprise. If I use the word “*retrenchment*” it is only because the information at my disposal shows that retrenchment has taken place; that persons who had been employed for years have now been laid off and thrown upon the ever-increasing unemployment market, and also I am borrowing a word from the Premier’s vocabulary.

It was on Wednesday night, 14<sup>th</sup> February, that the Premier, in announcing the withdrawal of certain taxes, said over the radio that as a result of those changes there would be retrenchment. Now today we hear from the Minister of Finance that this retrenchment has been caused in part by the events of Black Friday. So the Premier was so prescient of the future that nearly 48 hours before the holocaust on Black Friday he could have anticipated on Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> February, that retrenchment was threatened as a result of the tax withdrawals.

Now, let us examine it. On Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup>, the position, as it should have been seen and recognised by the Government, would have been that outlined at page 4 of the second Budget Speech of the Minister of Finance, that is, that the adjustments of the tax proposals would have reduced the yield of additional revenue from \$10.5 million to \$7.2 million. Therefore, there would have seen a reduction of \$3.3 million, and the conclusion that should have been drawn on Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> February, before Black Friday and the burning and looting, was that Government would have been unable to make a contribution of \$3.3 million from the Recurrent Budget to

the Development Budget, which had been anticipated on Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> January.

So I cannot see how retrenchment should have been threatened on that Wednesday because, as the proposals state there, the Recurrent Budget would have remained at \$65.59 million. The events of Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> February, came after, but the policy of retrenchment was announced and adumbrated before Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> February, and I am certainly not persuaded by any argument that the events of Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> February, are responsible for the policy of retrenchment which was adumbrated before Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> February.

This Government does not seem to take its task of governing seriously. It is just like the past colonial Governments which we have had. Whenever the employees of past colonial Governments asked for better conditions or wages the record was put on – *“We do not have the money.”*

The only originality shown by the present Government is that it uses as its whipping-boy the events of Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> February. Are the Members of this Government not going to grow out of that? The Members of this Government say today: *“Had it not been for the fact that we had to withdraw certain proposals, we would have had the money.”* Says also the Hon. Minister of Finance: *“Had it not been for the unjustified opposition to the Budget proposals, we would have had the money.”* What does that mean? Does it mean that the Members of this Government—I hope this will not be taken as an aspersion about their integrity, because I do not think that there is anything immoral about intelligence—are wicked? If the original proposals were such as to inure to the benefit of this country, then the withdrawal of these proposals is a sign of weakness because they are the Government.

It is true that, according to a certain ex-colleague of theirs, they had hoped to remain by the use of force against their opponents. The proposals were either good or bad in the circumstances of British Guiana. If they were good and the Government allowed them to be withdrawn, then it is childish and illogical for Members of the Government to come here and say that they had to withdraw the proposals because of an unjustified opposition. If the withdrawals were unjustified, Government should not have withdrawn them. They have condemned themselves.

Now, what were the tax proposals opposed by my Party? The tax proposals which weighed heavily on the working-class people and made their cost of living unbearable, and which, therefore, reduced their standard of living.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Burnham:** It is easy for what the Romans would call this *novus homo* to giggle, having forgotten the difficulties of being a member of the working-class in the past. But when a man was being asked to pay so much more for the necessities of life, how could he exist?

We heard a reference during the course of the debate to a desire on the part of the present Government to change the old structure, but has it made any attempt to change the old structure? One of the most disgusting recordings we have had played to us all the time is that "*we cannot do certain things in the context of a colonial system.*" What has prevented this Government from the time it came into office in 1957 from making a serious attempt to change the agricultural emphasis in this country from production for export to production for consumption? There was nothing in the way of its attempting such a reform, and if it had seriously tackled that problem from the time it came into power in 1957 instead of being interested in—

[**Mr. Benn:** You do not understand things.]

**Mr. Burnham:** Now, Mr. Speaker, so far as the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources is concerned, there is a portion of scripture which says, "*A little child shall lead them.*" What was to prevent the Government from changing the old structure, so that by the time it was prepared in 1961 and 1962 to place heavy taxation on imported foodstuffs there would already have been available local alternatives for these goods?

We have been asked by the Hon. Minister of Communications to congratulate the Government upon having banned or taxed Nescafe. That is so much like my little child; once she does one correct thing in a whole month — "*Daddy, do you think I have done well?*" That is the mentality of this Government; it does one little thing as far as the Budget proposals are concerned, and it wants us to congratulate it for that. Do you congratulate a man for doing something for which he is paid to do?

We hear that because of the colonial status which we enjoy at the moment we are unable to do certain things. This Government, or its predecessor which was itself, was unable to get a loan from the Swiss Bank at 6 percent. I do not see how this is germane, but may I point out that it was not a fact that we were unable to get the loan because we were a colonial territory, but the would-be lenders said: "*We will loan you the money, if Britain guarantees it.*" Unless you are able when Independence comes, and we shall very shortly be Independent, to establish such confidence as to get your loans without guarantees, the fact that we have Independence will amount to nothing. Are the Members telling us that the Swiss Bank would have given us the loan if we were Independent?

[**Mr. Mann:** Yes.]

**Mr. Burnham:** — This little infant, who was nowhere around when this matter took place, says "*yes.*" It is to my mind unrealistic to promise the community that, with Independence, retrenchment and everything that is bad will come to an end.

I think the PPP had better understand that Independence is primarily an instrument, and the effectiveness of the instrument is dependent upon the intelligence and skill of those who use it. What have we been able to observe in our present context? The Government cannot even use the instruments which it has at the moment. It would like to solve political problems with troops. Its public relations are so bad that the Government believes it can push down any authoritarian measure on the people. Independence will not make it easier for the Government to thrust measures down people's throats because, as far as I can see, Independence will not alter the division of political support.

If the retrenchment for which this Government has been responsible were exclusively in the development field, there would still have been room for criticism, because when the retrenchment started the Government, through its spokesmen, was still saying that Independence would come in 1962. According to the arguments adduced by the Government, Independence would have meant the ability to supplement the money available for the Development Programme by loans or assistance from outside. Therefore, since, according to the Hon. Minister of Finance at page 5, already in sight was \$21 million for the Development Programme and Independence was coming which would have immediately brought this windfall from abroad, the Government could have gone on spending from the \$21 million and when that was exhausted if the windfall did not come, then the retrenchment could have taken place.

On what ground can this retrenchment be explained? Are we being told that the \$21 million which the Hon. Minister of Finance said on the 31<sup>st</sup> January and the 3<sup>rd</sup> April was available immediately for the Development Programme has fled? Are we to understand that? Are we to understand that by April this \$21 million had been used up? Are we to understand that the argument that the Government had been using before that all the development capital and assistance would be available on Independence when it was anticipating Independence in 1962 no longer holds good?

I do not know whether the Ministers who have contributed to this debate are accurate when they say that the retrenchment that has taken place has had no political overtones so far as they are concerned. I do not know. But I wish to put the most favourable construction on the action which they have taken, and I would say that at least it shows that they are easily scared because the money available for the Development Programme was not used up. They have not told us that the estimates of revenue have been ambitious and optimistic, though they want me to analyse it; they want me to be the teacher and professor. They must establish that those estimates which they passed recently were unrealistic and optimistic. They must be able to establish that the 10 percent savings which they hope to make by keeping vacancies unfilled and by not purchasing equipment – all that is in the Minute from the Secretary to the Treasurer to Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments – would still be insufficient. They

must further be able to establish that, after deducting that 10 percent which they are hoping to save, not enough money would be left from the revenue to carry on the Service at the level at which it was in 1961. It is for the Government to persuade us. We do not have access to the facts; we do not have access to the files.

[**Interruption**]

**Mr. Burnham:** Well, if I know the files better than some Ministers, it is because of greater intelligence, not greater opportunity.

We are told by the Hon. Minister of Works and Hydraulics that it is not really retrenchment—I shall now deal with his disjointed and irrelevant remarks—it is really the completion of certain works. Excellent! For instance, he cites the Sea Defence Works, the East Bank Road, as completion of works. We, two weeks ago, debated a Motion on the adjournment which criticised the Government's failure to maintain at a reasonable civilised standard, the condition of the East Coast Road, and my latest mission to the West Coast has proved to me that the difference between the East Coast road and the West Coast Road is the difference between six and half-a-dozen.

So, if these casual employees—and, indeed, it has been a very generous Government that has had casual employees with five and seven years' service, and I know one casual employee, as the Government would call him, with 14 years' service! Indeed, the English language has changed. It is not my native language so I would not be sure whether my concept is right or whether the Government's is right. But if these "*casual*" employees who were laid off from the East Bank Road had not in fact been retrenched, can you tell me why Government has not shifted them to the maintenance of the East Coast and West Coast Roads?

[**Mr. Mann:** Brilliant!]

**Mr. Burnham:** I hear my observation being described as brilliant logic. I choose the source of my compliments: this particular one I resent.

While the Government is bemoaning the absence of money, the fact is that it really does not know what is there and what is not there. \$64,728 for the "*boys*"—village workers; over \$12,000 per annum for Mr. Kelshall.

[**Mr. Benn:** Get a new record.]

**Mr. Burnham:** It is nearly as old as the old, worn pages of the books brought here year after year by the Hon. the Premier

[**Laughter**]

**Mr. Burnham:** \$2,400 a year – Premier’s entertainment allowances; \$6,000 a year – Premier’s free house; and he goes gallivanting all about the place saying he is going to get money and he comes back empty-handed, using up thousands more of the taxpayer’s money.

This Government will never change – this colonial Government that leads us to believe that all good things will come from the changes we were getting in this country. It has attempted to change nothing. Its Members are always talking about Independence, but they are going to put new wine into old bottles; they are going to maintain the colonial structure of taxation. They said they were going to change the colonial structure of taxation, but no, as the Hon. Minister of Finance said: *“We did this because Mr. Kaldor told us to”*. In other words, whenever an itinerant expatriate comes here and says: *“Do this”*, they are going to do it.

This Government must stop mouthing, must stop accepting advice from every Tom, Dick and Harry who comes to the country. For instance, I met one of these itinerants and he was uninformed as to who were the merchants in this country, where they came from, what were their origins. People like those are asked to advise, and people like the Minister of Finance gets up in Court and says *“We did this because Mr. Nicholas Kaldor advised us to do it.”* And the Premier goes before the United Nations and says *“Our Budget was good because it was vetted and carried all the major proposals of Mr. Nicholas Kaldor.”* That is the mentality of those who will lead us to Independence.

It seems to me that Government’s putting in *“as soon as the budgetary position permits”* is to shy away from the real question. It is for this Government to tell, assuming that it had evidence of the necessity for retrenchment, of the unavoidability of retrenchment, and not leave us to grope in the dark. Never have I heard of Government doing what this Government is trying to do, and what it said when we proposed a \$4 per day minimum wage – *“when funds are available.”* The accusation has been levelled against us that we are playing to the gallery, and the hope has been expressed that the workers will discover their true enemies. For me that is not a hope: that is a certainty. Where we differ, of course, is as regards the identity of the workers’ enemies. Isn’t it nothing short of gallery play to add to the Motion the words *“as soon as the budgetary position permits?”* It either permits or it does not permit. If you say it does not permit, you should have the guts to say it does not and vote against the Motion.

It is the same as the Budget. *“The budget is good,”* says the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Finance, *“but we cannot afford to have the working-class demonstrate against us; therefore let us withdraw it.”* The budgetary position cannot permit it, but let us not give the impression that we really have a policy of retrenchment. So, let us throw a sop by adding a few words – *“as soon as the budgetary position permits.”* Of course the Government has the numbers and will carry the Amendment, but we have succeeded today in doing two things.

During the course of the remarks of the Minister of Communications, some reference was made to a marriage. I know of no such marriage. What I do know is an offer of concubinage made to us of the PNC by the PPP, but as people of high moral standard we will never permit ourselves to be the *demimondes* of the People's Progressive Party. I said that the Government has the numbers and will carry the Amendment, but we have succeeded in doing two things: first of all voicing the concern over and objection to the policy of retrenchment that is being followed by this Government, a policy which we say was being pursued since 1961 and was alluded to by the then Hon. Member for Georgetown North.

Secondly, we have exposed the emptiness of the Government and the fact that it has no proposals to pull this country out of the morass in which it now finds itself, and we have succeeded in having the Government admit that there is a policy of retrenchment, and even when the Government wants to amend a Motion it does not know how to do it so as not to vote for something which is condemnatory of itself. But it is said that it is never too late to learn. The only difficulty in our situation is that the lateness of this reported development on the part of the People's Progressive Party is taking a terrible toll in our country.

One final word. We have had a lecture from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Finance on the Civil Service holding the Government to ransom.

[**Mr. Mann:** Oh no.]

**Mr. Burnham:** I am paraphrasing. May I observe this: that in 1957 it ought to have been anticipated that Independence was a foregone conclusion. In 1957 also, it ought to have been anticipated that with Independence many of the structures and forms in the Civil Service would have to be changed or abolished. In 1957 also, it ought to have been anticipated that a definitive attitude ought to have been taken towards wooing the civil servants and explaining to them the role they have to play and the sacrifices they have to make like all other Guianese. I am not accepting the thesis that civil servants have been asking for more than they ought to ask, but for argument's sake let us say that the Parliamentary Secretary's proposition is correct.

The fact that the Civil Service wants to hold this Government to ransom and wants a larger share of the national income than this Government thinks it is entitled to, I think is primarily the fault of the Government, the failure of the Government to convince and take into its confidence a most important section of the population. It is no sense saying that the Civil Service is holding the Government to ransom. You cannot have a Government without a Civil Service. You can bring in troops and they can run trains and operate telegraphs. They can run boats but they cannot do civil servants' work, and the sooner this Government faces that fact and

takes the Civil Service into its confidence the better it will be for this country. I notice that when the Premier appeared before the Committee of Seventeen of the United Nations he suggested that the Civil Service was hostile to him, but when questioned by the representative of Ethiopia he could not give concrete example of hostility or disloyalty of the Civil Service. Whither are we drifting?

## Proposed Draft Constitution of Guiana: 31<sup>st</sup> August, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** On a point of order again! As I understand it, a document can be laid on the Table by a Member of the Government if it falls within the portfolio of one or other of the Ministers and is within the competence of the Government. According to section 22 of the British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1961, Her Majesty, on the advice of Her Privy Council, reserves to Herself the right to revoke, alter or amend the Constitution under which we operate at the moment. This Government, I submit, is not competent to put forward a proposal, I submit, if the House has decided that someone or other should put forward such a proposal. This cannot be a Government's document, I submit, because the Government is not competent to put it forward. It can only be done if this House decided that it should be prepared and put before the House. This document which is to be laid here has been circulated to the public, which is a breach of privilege. The Government cannot circulate to the public a document to be laid in the House before it is laid in the House. If it is a Governmental document it is a breach of privilege, but I submit that it is not a Governmental document.

## Motion on Financial Aid for Fire Victims: 31<sup>st</sup> August, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** My contribution will be short. I am sure the Hon. Member for Werk-en-Rust is appreciative of the financial limitations from which this Government suffers, and I do not think that that point has to be repeated. It seems to me that merely to say that you suffer from these limitations on the one hand and, on the other hand, to repeat your sympathy for the persons who are unemployed is not enough.

Let us assume that Government does not have the amount of money which it would take to implement the proposal in the Amendment. After all, it must be appreciated that it is not a grant that the Amendment envisages, but a loan on a long-term basis with a small interest. If this Government does not have money for that – it is always talking about cooperation – why does it not accept the principle of the extension of long-term credit facilities to meet this case, and then set up an inter-party committee to help it to work out the definitions of “*small businessmen*”; not only to sanction the Development Scheme, but also to help it to make approaches?

Let us face certain facts coldly and objectively. This Government has shown in recent times that, for one reason or another, it does not seem capable on its own of getting assistance in certain quarters. The obvious answer here is to admit your shortcomings and to see whether by presenting a national front on a crisis issue like this you can get those facilities. The Hon. Member for Werk-en-Rust, like the rest of us here, was not speaking only for himself. He was speaking on behalf of the People’s National Congress. We have considered this question and we feel it ostrich-like behaviour to say “*We sympathize, but we do not have the money*”. It is also bothering, I think, to criticise the Opposition for failing to define “*small businessmen*.” This is something that will have to be defined by general agreement. Certain criteria will have to be fixed, but these are details to be worked out.

I felt a certain amount of sympathy for the Hon. the Premier and the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Finance. One is inclined to forgive the Hon. Minister of Communications, who could not forget his reference to Judas, and we do not take him seriously because obviously he did not attempt to make a serious contribution. But if the Hon. Minister of Communications continues this sort of thing, the impression which the Opposition is bound to get is that the Government is being hypocritical if it talks about sympathy while deep down it wants to punish these urban workers who it is felt joined in the burning and looting.

Very often this Government shows sensitivity to criticism without appreciating that its very actions and statements lead people to draw conclusions. What would prevent the urban workers, who are the chief

sufferers in these circumstances, from assuming that the Government wants to spite them? If Government really feels strongly about this matter why did it wait for the Opposition to raise it? Why did it not issue a White Paper adumbrating what it feels should be done - some concrete proposal? Government has failed to show initiative, and when some initiative is shown from this side of the Table and some effort is made for a national approach to what is a notional crisis, we hear some criticism.

After consulting my colleagues I desire to move an Amendment with the leave of the Chair, which I think will establish the *bona fides* or *mala fides* of the Government. I move that the Amendment be amended by the substitution of the words "*accepts the principle of extending*" for the word "*extend*". We have been told by the Premier that he has made attempts in high quarters. I do not want to rub him too much, but he must get out of the attitude of "*high level and United Nations*". Show the people of the country what you can do. It is so much like some of those conservative elements in this community who will tell you they are big men in the community. They may be as unintelligent as anyone else, but because they have money in their pockets they are big men in the community.

It has been said that the workers were misled. They were not misled. To my mind they fought their first battle for survival and they won. There were casualties in battle, but after the British and the Americans defeated Germany they decided to see how they could live together peacefully and amicably. We have reached that stage; let us see how we can live amicably and remove the scars of battle which have been inflicted on both sides. I heard someone say "*Until there is another.*" Well, if there is a Hitler there will be another war. Let the Government show that its professed solicitude for the sufferers is genuine. We accept the limitations of the Government purse. Let us, therefore, add that the Government accepts the principle of extending these loans, and test the *bona fides* of the Government. I am not for one moment convinced that the Government's attitude, that it cannot afford it, is the correct one.

Let me say right away that if I have an expertise it is in the field of law and not economics, but it seems to me that if Government wanted to make a serious attempt, even from such funds as it may have at its disposal, to give this assistance, in point of fact Government will not be putting up all the money, because there are going to be certain reflections as a result of customs duties and income tax, such an attempt can be made. People who cannot now consume will have an opportunity to consume, because of their increased purchasing power, and I do not think that Government should look upon it as a pay-out of \$3 million, full stop. Apart from the fact that it will be a loan, there is the fact that year by year Government will be receiving not only the loan repayments but increased revenue as a result of this pump-priming of the economy.

But there are other advantages, including the psychological advantage, as something like that will tend to relieve a lot of the tension that exists.

That McGale report showed that in the urban areas unemployment was high before the fires and disasters of February 16. With the fires and the looting that unemployment figure has gone up even further in the urban areas. No wonder we have had the Rice Marketing Board being robbed – I will not say where the pistol came from – and a Bank payroll being held up. All these things go with the sort of breakdown of the fabric of society as a result of this pressure of unemployment which is greatest in the urban areas. I would like Government to consider this question, and I repeat that I would like Government to show its *bona fides* by accepting this Amendment to the Amendment.

## Strike of Employees of Rice Marketing Board: 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** It seems to me, if I may say so with respect, that the Government misunderstands what should be its position in this matter. The Hon. Member for Campbellville and other Members who have spoken have, in some cases, indicated the belief on their part of the truthfulness of some of the allegations made against the Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board and the administration. But, as I understand, what the Hon. Member for Campbellville has asked the Government is to see that this matter is clarified in one way or another.

I am satisfied, from such evidence as I have at my disposal, that there has been political patronage so far as jobs are concerned at the Board. I have heard that strikebreakers are being brought in, but whether I believe it or not is not the point. Whether or not I believe that there have been several acts or dishonesty in relation to cheques and the administration of the Board; whether or not I believe that there have been several acts of dishonesty in relation to rice bags is not material. What is material is the fact that, as a result of these allegations being made, there is some misunderstanding at the Board between employers and employees.

There is concern amongst members of the public as to what is happening at the Rice Marketing Board. The Rice Marketing Board is the sole selling agent for the product of the largest but one agricultural industry in this country, and consumers attributed the shortage of rice locally to the disturbance and misunderstanding at the Board. Reaping time is around the corner when the influx of rice is going to be greater than it is at the moment; certain categories of skilled workers are on strike and cannot be replaced regardless of what we may hear in this House from the Hon. Ministers. All of these things, to my mind, have the cumulative effect of leading us inevitably to the conclusion that all is not well at the Rice Marketing Board. Since public funds are involved, since public confidence is involved, since the effect upon the economy of this country can be unfavourable, let us have an Inquiry into the matter.

Let us suppose for argument's sake that what has been said by the Hon. Minister is right, and that the Chairman of the Board has been guilty of no impropriety, patronage or discrimination so far as jobs are concerned; it must be remembered that there is a trade union practice that scabs should not be used in order to break a strike; if everything is correct so far as the Board is concerned, what can be better for this Government and the Board than to have the matter investigated by an impartial and public Commission of Inquiry?

The Hon. Minister of Natural Resources, who has a penchant for working up steam, should be told now by me that I know that he said that if he had the power he would put the Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board on a

boat and shoot him. He knows that what I am saying is true. It seems to me that, in the circumstances, instead of the Hon. Minister ignoring our plea, he should yield to it and have the matter investigated, if only for the purpose of showing that these allegations are ill-founded.

It does not matter to me one iota whether or not the strike has been encouraged by a political Party or political Parties. I am happy to know that the Hon. Minister did not indulge in the inaccuracy of suggesting that the political Party to which I belong had anything to do with the strike. But a certain metamorphosis seems to take place when one moves from the ranks of the agitator to the bench of the Minister, because I recall that the Leader of the present Government stated clearly and unequivocally in 1954 that no political Party can get workers to go on strike unless there is some basic reason for discontent.

So it does not lie in the mouths of the Members of the present Government to make these statements. They may have every faith in the Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board; even those who have litigated with the Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board – successfully albeit – may have faith in him as Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board, but the point is that Government Ministers, busy as they are with affairs of the State, do not have the opportunity of knowing everything that goes on. The Government Ministers may set policy, but they may not know whether it is true or not that the Board's Manager is now a figurehead.

Those are vital things; those are things that affect the Board, the industry, the country and the economy. Let us have the position clarified, and though I believe some of these allegations, I promise this Government on my word—

[An Hon. Member (Government): What?]

[Laughter]

**Mr. Burnham:** There was no circuitous language used to call me a liar, nor was the French phrase *qui s'explique se complique* used in referring to me. They did not say that about me; they did not say that I am a liar, so when I give my word, there is no document which can be brought to prove that my word cannot be accepted. I give the Government my word that if there was an impartial investigation and these allegations were proved false, I shall be the first to come out and say I have been misled and I have been drawing conclusions on insufficient evidence.

## Motion on the Second Reading of the Public Corporations Bill: 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1962

**Mr. Burnham:** Perhaps the Premier may explain a few things in his reply. Of course, speaking for our Party, I will say that coming events cast their shadows. The Hon. Member for Werk-en-Rust has pointed out that this blanket authority is unsatisfactory and seeks to give arbitrary powers to the Government which we have good reason to believe the latter will misuse. Another weakness, from our point of view, is that responsibility, so far as the Ministries are concerned, is not clear. The Council of Ministers is going to be the authority for the establishment of public corporations, but when it comes to the appointment of the members of a corporation we see that a Minister is to be responsible. One has no idea of which Minister will be responsible, and as I understand it, legislation should be precise and accurate.

We also notice that there is going to be power in the Council of Ministers to exempt certain corporations from any of the provisions of the Ordinance. That we do not understand at all. It is proof of our earlier contention that this bit of legislation is intended to pass over the power of the Legislature to the Council of Ministers and some Minister unspecified and unidentifiable at the moment.

There are other strange proposals in this Bill. For instance, we find that the Statute of Limitation will not apply to a claim brought by any corporation set up under the Ordinance. If perchance the principle were adumbrated that the Statute of Limitation should not apply to claims brought by or against a corporation one should have seen some *quid pro quo* for robbing a private citizen or a right which he has always enjoyed.

But these corporations are going to be entire creatures of the Government—entire Government bodies – and the people who serve on them are going to be hand-picked. We have had our experiences with corporations like the Electricity Corporation, the Credit Corporation, the Rice Marketing Board and the Public Service Commission, and we have seen that in these cases political appointments have been the order of the day rather than appointments on the basis of quality, experience and ability. In fact, I have read such a criticism of the Rice Development Corporation.

Having done that, you go further and say that these corporations can sue people at any time, but they cannot be sued and that the Statute of Limitation should not stand in their way. Instead of making applicable the Justice Protection Ordinance or something corresponding to section 206 of Chapter 150 so far as suits against members of the corporation are concerned, clause 13 (1) states:

*“No action, suit, prosecution or other proceedings shall be brought or instituted personally against any member of a corporation in respect of any act done bona fide in pursuance or execution or intended execution of his duties.”*

Why is it necessary to have this special exemption? We might have understood and appreciated the *raison d'être* for giving these corporations and their governing bodies the protection of the Justice Protection Ordinance, but we cannot accept a provision like clause 13 in this Bill.

Then we look at clause 16 where there is a new principle involved and embodied. This clause indicates that in the day-to-day running of practically all of these corporations the Council of Ministers may give directions as to the policy to be followed in the exercise and performance of their functions. The essential thing about a public corporation is that it is independent of the Government and of political influence. It has its terms of reference and the doctrine of *ultra vires* is sufficient to keep it in check. What is really happening is that the Council of Ministers will be a sort of glorified holding company of directors—directors of holding company or association or housewives—and will be giving directions here and there from time to time to these public corporations the directorates of which consist of their cronies.

We go further and find that these public corporations will be endowed with the power, if the Ministers think fit, to recover debts by parate execution. Those of us who know and understand what parate execution means, appreciate that it is a most drastic remedy and has so far never been used in this country save for the collection of rates or taxes or debts on property.

Clause 39 means that parate execution can be levied against property for debts—personal debts, and not debts *in rem* attached to a property. We have seen what has happened in several cases of parate execution. Because of its summary nature, it is possible for the person or the parties to whom the property belongs not to be apprised of the fact that action will be taken against the property. Whereas if that were not so, personal debts would be the subject of judgments *in personam* of which individuals would be apprised in the court, and when execution is levied on the judgment the person would have due notice.

It is true that the Hon. Premier moved the Second Reading of the Bill while I was out of the House, but I was within hearing.

[**Mr. Wilson:** You should have been here.]

**Mr. Burnham:** It is a matter of being within hearing distance and not necessarily being present in the Chamber. The Hon. Premier has not condescended to explain the purpose of this Bill. Look at this bit of legislation that has been thrust upon us today. It is said:

(1) The Government does not want to come to the House from time to time with legislation in order to get specific approval for setting up the various corporations.

(2) You give the Council of Ministers absolute power as to the appointment on all of the boards of these bodies. In other words, though it may well be a public corporation that affects a particular economic or geographical group, that economic or geographical group has no right to voice its opinion regarding a corporation that will affect its interest.

(3) A vague Minister, somewhere about, can exercise a tremendous amount of power.

(4) You are giving an executive arm of the Government with respect to any of these corporations from any of the provisions of this Ordinance, which provisions may be some of a few provisions that seek to keep a certain amount of control over the executive.

(5) The Ministers, contrary to what we have ever seen, heard or intended – I cannot remember whether it has been seen or heard – will be permitted to interfere in these matters.

Sometime ago it was alleged that the Ministers were interfering in certain matters, and the members of the Opposition complained about it. Now, the Ministers are making it legal for them to interfere and put their fingers into the pie from time to time. Under clause 16 they will have power to give directions of a general character as to the policy to be followed in the exercise and performance of their functions, and the corporation shall give effect to any such directions. Then, you are going to rob the citizen of a right which he has enjoyed so far.

It is no sense, on this point, saying that the corporation may be liable if the person who is exempt could be considered a servant or agent, because we know on many occasions the parent body or the real principal will, as a matter of morals, honour an obligation. Very frequently they will not honour it if the person responsible is not liable.

This subsection (2) of clause 13 does not help any. You have removed the citizen's right to action against members of these corporations, if it can be claimed that the individual acted *bona fide*. "*Bona fide*" is a good phrase; I think it is golden Latin. But we who have practised in the courts know how difficult it sometimes is to ascertain *bona fides* or *mala fides*. I cannot see why the citizen should be robbed of the right of suing where he has suffered damages as a result of the act or acts of a member or members of these corporations.

And further – I think this is point number seven, Mr. Speaker – we have this parate execution, an unusual remedy which, for the first time in the history of our legal system, is going to be extended to serve as a remedy for personal debts. Where are we going, Mr. Speaker? What this House is being asked to do today is to take all of its powers and hand them over to an executive, and that we shall never do – at least the Party for which I

speaking and which I represent will never do it. We agree with public corporations, certainly; but bring each public corporation Bill here and we will pass it easily. Then we will know what powers you want and what powers you need, but we are not giving you any blanket authority. So far as we are concerned, that is very clear – and don't let the thoughts be mixed, don't let the principles be mixed – we agree with public corporations, but we do not agree with putting into the hands of the Government all these tremendous powers, despite the suavity, I must concede – I almost said unwonted suavity – with which the Hon. the Premier has tried to gloss over the Second Reading of this Bill.























