

**HUGH DESMOND HOYTE, S.C.**  
**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEECHES**  
**VOLUME 4**

**8<sup>th</sup> January 1993 - 6<sup>th</sup> December 2001**

Hugh Desmond Hoyte, S.C.  
National Assembly Speeches Volume 4  
Compiled by Maurice B. Henry for the National Assembly, Parliament of  
Guyana, 2012.

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ISBN 978-1-907493-88-1



# PREFACE

On the death of Mr. Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, President, on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 1985, Mr. Hugh Desmond Hoyte, Prime Minister, acceded to the Office of President. Following the 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1985 General Elections he was declared President. As his Biographical Summary shows, he held several Ministerial Offices including Vice-President and Prime Minister prior to these dates.

Following the General Election held on 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1992 Dr. Cheddi Jagan was declared President on the 9<sup>th</sup> October. Mr. Hoyte became Minority Leader and he held this office until his death on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2002.

This collection of his Parliamentary Speeches over the years 1969 to 2001 is the first step taken in keeping with the Fourth Resolved Clause of Resolution No. 67 dated 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2008 of the National Assembly, which states –

*“Be It Further Resolved:*

*That this National Assembly calls on the Government to designate a State Institution to be responsible for Historical Research and Documentation to chronicle and archive all of the works of each of the Presidents of Guyana for the benefit of future generations of Guyanese.”*

These speeches are recorded in four volumes as follows:

- (i) Volume I - National Assembly of the Second Parliament of Guyana, 1969 – 1970

National Assembly of the Second Parliament of the Republic of Guyana, 1970 – 1972

- (ii) Volume II - National Assembly of the Third Parliament of the Republic of Guyana, 1973 – 1980

- (iii) Volume III - National Assembly of the Fourth Parliament of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, 1981 – 1985

National Assembly of the Fifth Parliament of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, 1986 – 1992

(iv) Volume IV - National Assembly of the Sixth Parliament of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana , 1993 – 1997

National Assembly of the Seventh Parliament of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana , 1998 – 2001

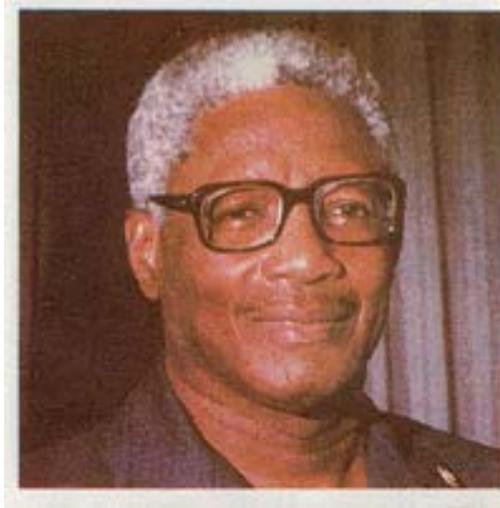
National Assembly of the Eight Parliament of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana , 2001

Volume III of these speeches contains Mr. Hoyte's addresses to the National Assembly on the Ceremonial Opening of the First and Second Sessions of the Fifth Parliament of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.

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A number of Official Reports (*Hansard*) of the Proceedings of the National Assembly are missing for the years 1969 – 2002. Some of these contained speeches of the Late Hugh Desmond Hoyte, and it seems unlikely that these will ever be recovered.

## Biographical Summary:



Hugh Desmond Hoyte was a former President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, former Leader of the main Opposition Party, the People's National Congress (PNC) and former Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament of Guyana.

Born in Georgetown, Guyana in March 9, 1929, Mr. Hoyte received B.A. and LL.B. degrees from the University of London. He was a British trained lawyer, a Barrister-at-Law of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple and a Member of the Guyana Bar. He was appointed a Queen's Counsel in 1969, which designation was changed to Senior Counsel in 1970 when Guyana became a Republic.

Between 1969 and 1984, Mr. Hoyte held many Ministerial offices, including those of Home Affairs, Finance, Works and Communications and Economic Development and Co-operatives. In 1980 he was appointed a Vice President and in 1984 he became First Vice President and Prime Minister.

On the death of the first Executive President of the Republic Mr. Hoyte served as President of the Republic from August 1985 to October 1992. During his Presidency, he initiated far-reaching electoral and economic reforms which strengthened the bases of the democratic culture of Guyana, promoted market oriented policies, and stimulated economic growth.

As a Minister of Government, he had at various times responsibility for African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) affairs under the Lomé Convention

and was the ACP spokesman on sugar from 1981 to 1983. His portfolio also included Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Affairs. As a member of its Conference, the Heads of Government of CARICOM charged him with responsibility for promoting freedom of movement within the Community and for coordinating CARICOM's policy on the environment for the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, and in general. He was also nominated CARICOM's spokesman on sugar.

Prior to his full-time service as a Government Minister, he held many other public offices. He was Chairman of the Legal Practitioners' Committee, a statutory body which deals with disciplinary matters relating to members of the legal profession; Chairman of the Timber Grants Wages Council; Chairman of the Customs Tariff Appeals Tribunal; and a member of the Elections Commission, among other offices. He was also deeply involved in the Trade Union Movement and was Legal Adviser to the Trades Union Congress and several member Unions.

In his ministerial capacity, Mr. Hoyte served as Guyana's Governor on the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank and headed many delegations to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; the Caribbean Committee for Development and Cooperation; the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meetings; ACP/EEC Meetings; and other regional and international conferences on economic, financial and developmental issues. He was Guyana's chief representative at the deliberations which led to the establishment of the Latin American Economic System (SELA), and was a member of the Latin American Council from 1975 to 1983. He had maintained a strong interest in regional and hemispheric affairs and spoke and wrote widely on this subject.

Mr. Hoyte had a keen interest in ecological and environmental matters. In this area, he had worked closely with the London-based Commonwealth Human Ecology Council and had written and spoken on these issues, both locally and internationally. He was the architect of the Iwokrama International Rainforest Project in Guyana, which he initiated at the 1989 Commonwealth Heads of Government conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Mr. Hoyte was a Life Senator and a member of the Supreme Council of the Presidency of the International Parliament for Safety and Peace, which has observer status with the United Nations; a member of the Advisory Board of the Women's Federation for World Peace; and an honorary member of the Board of The Americas United Foundation. He was also a Patron of the Errol Barrow Memorial Trust Fund (a regional Trust established in honour of the late Barbadian Prime Minister) and a Patron of the Commonwealth Human Ecology Foundation based in London.

Mr. Hoyte, who was married to the late Mrs. Joyce Hoyte and had two children who predeceased him, died on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2002.

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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SIXTH  
PARLIAMENT OF THE CO-OPERATIVE  
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA**



## Motion on the Approval of Government's Policy: 8<sup>th</sup> January, 1993

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker. I am sure that we are all grateful to His Excellency, the President, for his appearance in this Honourable House, and for the Address which he made to us.

I notice this morning in one of our newspapers a screaming headline which said '**PNC rejects Jagan's Parliament Address**'. I would like to explain that that is not quite accurate. We on this side of the House have been saying that we found the speech disappointing in that it did not, as the Motion suggests, adumbrate policy, and therefore we found it difficult to accept that assertion. But there are other means, as you know, Mr. Speaker, of dealing with a matter in this House rather than by rejecting it. To us the speech was generally *jejune* and uninspiring, and did not articulate any coherent policy which the Government will pursue in the short term or the long term. In our view, it should have done that.

The drafter of the Motion is obviously blessed with an imaginative talent, fertile imagination and an inventive mind, because he is asking us to approve of policy which has been adumbrated in the Address when no such policy appears. I would think, Mr. Speaker that the only way the Address could be brought within the ambit of the Motion is for the learned Attorney General to invoke a principle of equity which says that equity looks upon that as done which ought to have been done.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** And so we could proceed on the assumption and the fiction that indeed policy was articulated and adumbrated in the speech by His Excellence the President.

We have just listened to a rather vigorous intervention by the Hon. Minister of Finance. I would like to say that in many instances the only thing he left out in telling us some of the matters which he related was "*ma riddle, ma riddle, mare*". I think that he knows as well as everybody else that one can manipulate statistics in a way which does not reflect actuality; and for him to tell us that during the time of the PPP in the 50s, or 60s or whenever, the PPP devoted 30 percent of its Capital Programme – I think he was talking about capital expenditure or current expenditure, whatever it I was – to the social service, but in the PNC's time only 7 percent was devoted, that must surely be a misuse of statistics. If I spend one cent out of a penny that is 50 percent; if I spend one cent as an addition to another cent that is 100 percent. If I spend \$5 out of \$10 that is 50 percent, but which is the greater contribution? It has been said, Mr. Speaker, that there are lies, damned lies and statistics and it behoves any

professional to be extremely careful especially when he is addressing a lay audience, in the use of statistical data.

His Excellency the President said in his speech that one of his Government's major thrusts would be good governance. That is a laudable thing, because it does not matter what programme you devise for agriculture, for health or for education, what programme you devise in any of the other sectors of Government or of the country, nothing is going to be successful, nothing is going right, unless there is good governance. It is easy to state the principles of governance – the rhetoric is easy – but the practice is most difficult.

Good governance is a complex concept which includes, among other things, an adherence to the rule of law, the maintenance of a healthy motivated public service; due observance of the rights and dignity of people, no matter how humble; freedom to promulgate ideas and expressions, to exchange opinions; and a continuing effort to consult opposition parties and as wide a spectrum as possible of people in the country.

We can ask ourselves, Mr. Speaker, how has the PPP/Civic Government been measuring up to these principles of good governance? I agree that these are early days, but also would contend that even in these early days the PPP/Civic Government has been showing some distressing tendencies not to observe the principles of good governance. The rule of law, which is an important and necessary ingredient of good governance, would require the Government to adhere to the norms, the conventions, the laws which regulate the life of society and its relationship with the various sectors of the society, with individual citizens and, most important of all, or, at least, very important, with the Public Service. But regrettably, Mr. Speaker, there has been a discernible tendency on the part of the Government to be impatient of the constraints of these rules, these conventions, these norms, which exist to ensure due regularity and stability and fairness and equity in the state. There have been so many examples of this tendency to stray from the straight and narrow path. We know, Mr. Speaker, that so many public servants and so many Public Sector employees have been dismissed, or efforts have been made to dismiss them, without regard to the appropriate procedures, or the terms of their contract, without regard for their dignity as human beings.

Witness, for example, the dismissal of Mr. Steve Bovell. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> November last year, a junior functionary of the Office of the President turned up with a letter which he gave to Mr. Bovell. This letter dismissed him from his post as from the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Whether you say dismissed, whether you say sacked, whether you say terminated, whether you say relieved of his job, it is the same thing. He was relieved of his post as from the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is inconsistent with any proper procedure, any respect for an employee or for any rule of governing human relations. I am sure the Hon. Minister of labour would concede that that was highly inappropriate.

Somebody in the back bench, Mr. Speaker, is saying that his salary was over \$200,000, so what? You are talking about less than US\$ 2000, which is a small price to pay for any professional of calibre. You cannot recruit people today unless you are prepared to pay them. You cannot recruit people – and I am going to deal with this matter a little later on – you cannot recruit persons of calibre, of professionalism, of integrity to man the various important positions in the State unless you are prepared to pay them. I'm going to explain to you, a little later on, through you, Mr. Speaker, the PNC rationale for beginning to pay selected people improved emoluments. But I am not talking about the level of his emoluments, I am talking about the mode of his dismissal, which was not calculated to inspire anybody with confidence, and, certainly, was one of the things that have contributed to the demoralization of the Public Service.

There can be no doubt, again, that we see this same tendency in the purported dismissal of Dr. Barton Scotland, distinguished Public Officer, with years of competent service to this country, loyal, devoted, dedicated service, who is said to have been dismissed by a letter sent by somebody in the Ministry of Finance. He was a person duly appointed by the Public Service Commission which was the authority to dismiss. He was not dismissible by anybody working in the Ministry of Finance.

And there can be no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that the whole set of circumstances leading to the sending on leave of the Customs Officers was very badly handled. I am not concerned about the pros and cons of corruption or lack of corruption. We do not condone corruption. We think it is right and proper that the Government should attempt to deal with corruption where it is found. But in dealing with people, in dealing with Public Officers, we need to follow procedures that are not only fair and equitable but are seen to be so.

Today Mr. Speaker, many people are being harassed. Indeed one person who has had an association with the People's National Congress, is being asked, "*Well, why don't you emigrate?*" there is pressure on that person: "*Emigrate, or lose your job.*" Why should anybody, who is not a criminal, emigrate from country? Why should anybody be pressured to emigrate from this country? And when Public Officers are subject to abuse, are stigmatized as 'super scale or super salary free-riders', that is not calculated to fill them with any degree of confidence in the discharge of their duties.

Mr. Speaker, already the Public Service is demoralized. Already many hard working, competent Public Servants have resigned. Already many more have decided to leave, at a time when this Government is saying it needs people. It is not creating a climate conducive to attracting competent, talented people to work in the service. And no Government is going to be successful, no Government is going to make a success of its policies and Programmes, if it is unable to attract a high calibre of Public Officers and make them feel comfortable and happy in their employment.

They must feel secure, they must feel a sense of dignity, they must feel a sense of self-esteem; and, Mr. Speaker, at this time we have to look at their pay packages. It is unrealistic to believe that this Government, or any Government, can attract people to serve or remain in the Public Service at depressed salaries. People will not come into the service, because of low pay. They will not come, because of the capricious behaviour of the PPP/Civic government towards Government employees.

We in the PNC realized the problem of Public Service pay, and we had this matter examined as part of the terms of reference of the consulting firm of Peat Marwick and McClintock, the firm which did the work on the reorganization of the Public Service. The pay or grading policy document or report which was submitted to us was being used as the basis for raising the pay of Public Officers to a level which was reasonable in all the circumstances. The objective was to progressively raise the salaries of Public Officers to a point where those salaries had some reasonable relationship to the salaries paid in the private sector. That was reasonable, and that is the only way that his country can go, and that is the only way that this Government can go. The report is in the archives of the Public Service Ministry. I would urge the Government to look at this report and to start considering its implementation, because we had already started. We had delinked the salaries of teachers from those of the Public Service, and we had delinked the salaries of doctors and medical people from those of the Public Service, so that we would not make the mistake of equating these categories of workers, and we would have the flexibility to deal with various categories according to their own merit.

This is a serious matter, and I am concerned about it because I believe that we are not going to go any place until we begin to address the question of salaries of Public Officers and the Public Officers themselves are satisfied that we intend to do something about it. We cannot blandly say 8 percent. That is not a policy. Nor can be blandly talk about 'dollar-a-year' people. You are not going to get them. The PPP used to boast that they had thousands of young people ready, who will be able to come home to fill all these posts in Guyana. Where are they? Are they coming? You know there was a calypso, '**Better must come one day, one day**'. They are like 'better'? They are not coming. They will not come until we address the question of pay packages and we will not –

[Interruption]

**Mr. Hoyte:** – I am very glad that the Hon. Member has put a terminal data on his tenure because some people were saying till eternity, so that there is still time.

Mr. Speaker, good governance requires us to look at all of these things. The Civil Service is not going to be happy. It will continue to be demoralised if there is this attitude of contempt towards them and if the question of their pay is not going to be addressed in an adequate manner.

But good governance, Mr. Speaker, requires also that there be a clear distinction between the functions of the political directorate, on the one hand, and the functions of the Public Service directorate on the other. But regrettably, Mr. Speaker, the PPP/Civic Government has breached this cardinal rule by politicizing the Public Service, by appointing a practising politician, a person whose name was on the list of candidates for elections, to be the Head of the Civil Service, so that utter confusion has been inserted into the ranks of the Civil Service. There is great fear and uncertainty, and it is important, Mr. Speaker, that the Government act promptly to correct this gross anomaly and this dangerous error.

People in the Service are very concerned. People in the Service are demoralized. People in the Service have been moved to a point where they are afraid to give honest technical assistance and technical advice, which is their function, because all the rules have been thrown overboard and they are not sure whether they are talking to a Public Officer or they are talking to a politician. And what kind of good governance are we talking about, Mr. Speaker, when Ministers themselves refuse to obey the law, refuse to acknowledge the demarcation as between ministries, when there is such palpable lack of coordination, if not conflict, among the Ministries of this Government? All those things negate good governance.

Let me give you some examples, and these examples could be multiplied. I give you examples from a key Ministry, that is the Ministry of Finance, because that is pivotal to the whole system. It is an important Ministry and if you have confusion there, you are going to have confusion in our whole Government system. Just to give you some examples. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1992, the Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry wrote to the Comptroller of Customs advising him that a certain Mr. Raymond Gaskin, Adviser to the Minister of Finance, was authorized to sign documents, granting a waiver for permits for immediate delivery, goods to be released prior to processing of documents, permission for examination of goods at private premises. That was on 2<sup>nd</sup> November. Mr. Gaskin was to have this authority to deal with these matters; but two days later the Minister himself wrote to the Comptroller, telling him 'nothing of the sort'. That the Comptroller must not do any of these things; must not issue any PID's; must not release any goods prior to processing; must not grant any permission for the examination of goods in private premises. Then went on to say that no waiver of those instructions must be implemented without his approval.

So here you have two Ministers apparently in conflict. The Minister of Trade giving a direction which I think humbly, Mr. Speaker, he had no authority to give. He was usurping the function and jurisdiction of his colleague, the Minister of Finance. But he gave it. Well, he might have been acting. But two days later, those instructions are in effect, countermanded. So there was obvious conflict between the Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Finance.

Shortly after this instruction to the Comptroller of Customs and Excise that he was not to grant any PID without the express approval of the Minister, two shipment of goods arrived for Laparkan. They were not perishables. (These were the exceptions – perishables). But there was a stamp on the document, signed by Mr. Gaskin, purporting to grant a waiver. More confusion, because Mr. Gaskin's name was not on the list of authorized persons to give that permission. So where are we getting to? Within the Ministry of Finance, confusion and more confusion.

And then further, Mr. Speaker, bear in mind that the Minister of Finance had said, *“Do not issue any PID, do not grant any permission for goods to be released prior to processing, do not grant any permission for goods to be inspected on private premises”*; and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December, the Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry writes to the Comptroller of Customs saying that he is urgently requesting him to reintroduce the PID.

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Isn't the Minister of Trade on speaking terms with his colleagues? First of all it is wrong, palpably wrong, for a Minister to be writing an official in another Ministry. His line of contact, his channel of communication, his colleague Minister. And his duty was to telephone the Minister, speak to the Minister.

**[The Speaker:** Hon. Member, your time is up.]

**[Mr. Sase Naraine:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to complete his speech.]

**[Question put, and agreed to.]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** I was saying that all this talk of good governance is meaningless unless people, and particularly Ministers, are prepared to observe the rule of law. The rule of law has not only to do with statue law; it has to do with relations with private citizens and all of that; it has to do with the norms and the conventions which act as a cement for the orderly conduct of the affairs of the Government. It restrains Ministers from getting off their turf and poaching on the turf of their colleague Ministers. It restrains Ministers from going above the heads of their colleagues, and dealing with officials in other Ministries. We have had this sort of thing developing in the PPP/Civic Government and it bodes no good for the development of this country.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, as one colleague on the other side is suggesting, that these are early days and they will sort these matters out. I raise them, not by way of carping criticism. I don't raise them to score political points, but in the hope that, as we ventilate these matters, the Government will

indeed take action to correct them, because I believe that all of us have a vested interest in see a Government which is going to work smoothly and properly within the framework of our laws, our rules and our regulations.

But one more example. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> November, there is a Minute from the Head of the Presidential Secretariat to the Comptroller of Customs informing him of the waiver of all duties and consumption tax on a car which had been imported by a private person. Now, Mr. Speaker, this is confusion worse confounded. And then the Head of the Presidential Secretariat copies this to the Secretary to the Treasury. But surely the person in whom this power to waive duty is vested in is the Minister of Finance?

So you have all kinds of irregular behaviour going on. I want to say this, Mr. Speaker: if I refer to anybody by name or by office, it is not to disparage or belittle that person; it is merely to illustrate the particular point of irregularity which I am trying to make, because I do feel that this disregard for due procedure and due process is going to disrupt the work of the Government, it is going to hamper the work of the Government, and it is going to make all of these grandiose plans futile and ineffectual.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, it is important that at the centre a proper example be set, because already this tendency to obey no rules is being observed in the Regions. In one Region the Regional Council, the PPP/Civic Regional Council, has gone so far as to purport to deploy members of the Guyana People's Militia. That is in Region 2.

Mr. Speaker, I think that by now everybody knows what is happening with the people at the State Planning Secretariat. A decision was taken that the Secretariat would now become a Unit in the Ministry of Finance. Fine! That's the prerogative of the Government; I take it that they would change the law in due course. But then apparently that decision was changed and the new idea was, I understand, that people would be deployed to various Ministries. Some of them were to be deployed to the Ministry of Finance, but lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, when these persons turned up, there was no room for them. Some went to the Ministry of Health and could not be accommodated, and some even went to the Ministry of Finance and could not find a place. Not true? Well, if the Minister says so, I am bound to accept his word. But what about the other Ministries where they are being deployed?

But Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that here are decisions being made and implemented without careful pre-planning. I think that that kind of activity does not help in bolstering the morale of our public officers.

We are told, in the Address by His Excellency the President, that there will be no harassment of Political Parties in their search for political support, and that is fine. No victimization and all of that – we have heard that before. No harassment, no victimization, that is also part of the requirement of good governance; and yet, despite all this fine rhetoric,

strenuous efforts are being made to prevent me from broadcasting a ten-minute programme which I have on certain TV stations.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** I did not control any TV stations. Freedom of expression, they say. I'm sorry my friend, Minister Nagamootoo, is not here.

But what is all of this rhetoric unless it finds expression in actuality? What is all the rhetoric unless we can see it happening on the ground? Talk is fine, but we need to see the practical effects of these things that the President has spoken so grandiloquently about. Mr. Speaker, in the light of the President's statement, I would ask the Hon. Minister, Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, in his intervention, to dissociate his Government from this dastardly act that I've just mentioned, from this effort which is being made to pressurize the owners of certain TV station to shut my voice up and cancel an innocuous ten-minute programme which I have every fortnight. If the Government is afraid of that, well then I am very sorry for them.

Let me say that good governance also refers to the position and attitude of an Opposition, and I want to say for the records of this Honourable House, that the PNC in opposition will be a responsible Opposition. It will not oppose merely for the sake of opposing. It will not, as was said of the Whig Party of England, oppose everything and propose nothing. It will oppose measures, policies, Programmes which it considers to be inimical to the best interests of this county. And it will oppose on matters of principle. But it will not set out unnecessarily to disrupt the smooth workings of the Government.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** We will support all action that will redound to the benefit of the people of Guyana, and, as I have said, we would consider it our duty to help to promote policies and Programmes that are in the national interest. We are willing to cooperate with the Government within the bounds of reason and in the national interest; but that cooperation, Mr. Speaker, would not automatic. It would have to be earned.

There has been talk about consultation, but we are yet to see it. We have read in the newspapers about Government's proposals for the Race Relations Commission. We have read about the establishment of a Committee or Commission to look into the question of Amerindian development, but we know nothing about it; we have not been consulted. We have read and heard about the establishment of a Commission on constitutional reform, but we have not been consulted.

This is not a complaint: this is a statement of fact, because I want to say that these are not Governmental issues. These are national issues, and I

want to remind members of this Honourable House that we secured 44 percent of the national votes -

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** -and there is no way that the Government could hope to carry out its policies and Programmes successfully without a large measure of cooperation from the People's National Congress.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** We, on this side of the House, have a duty to protect and preserve the national interest – a duty which devolves on all of us; and we are as loyal as any other person in this country. We have a duty to enhance the well-being of all the people of Guyana, and we will do our duty to the people of Guyana. We will discharge honourably the mandate with which they have invested us, and at all times place the interests of Guyana first, for those interests, with us are paramount and will forever be paramount.

[Applause]

## **Motion on the Approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for 1993 Budget Debate: 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1993**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, it would be ungracious to me not to tender my congratulations to the Hon. Minister of Finance on his maiden outing, in the presentation of a Budget to this Honourable House. But I do think that it is regrettable that he did not confine himself to a presentation that was contained in a purely technical context. To have spent nearly an hour of his time in a tirade against the People's National Congress did little to enhance his own reputation and professionalism. I think it rather diminished him in stature and had the unfortunate effect of, from time to time, shifting the focus of this debate, as a number of people took up some of the unfortunate irrelevancies which were contained in his presentation.

My colleague, the Hon. Member Dr Kenneth King, dealt extremely well with the distortions and unprofessional treatment which was given to the PNC stewardship, and I do not wish to repeat them. But I am compelled to deal with two matters which the Honourable Minister of Finance thought it fit to advert to, which became subjects of many interventions in the course of this debate and which are not unrelated to the question of development and progress of this country. They are what I will call the ethnic question and nepotism. At various points in the Minister's speech, he dragged in by the scruff of its neck the question of ethnic discrimination, accusing the People's National Congress of alleging such practices on the part of the present regime.

Undoubtedly this is an important matter and we would be doing ourselves and our country a disservice, if we were to pretend that an ethnic question did not exist in our country.

In fact, in every plural society there are tensions. In every plural society there are people who seek to take advantage of differences of race, culture, religions and social background, but the important thing for political leaders, the important thing for people who would like to see their country make progress in a context of peace and tranquillity is to decide how best we can manage tensions within our country. As political leaders, we sought not to dis-acknowledge the fact of ethnic discrimination because it exists, but we ought to confront it and deal with it in an intelligent and constructive manner. We need to understand today that there is much anger outside on the streets on this issue, that there are many people who perceive that ethnic discrimination is rampant. The point is not whether their perception is right or wrong. The reality is their perception and it is our duty as political leaders to minimise that perception and to try to get people to understand that the better way is to find *modus vivendi* in which all of us could live in peace and harmony.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I do not think that, as we approach the question, there is time for cosmetology. I do not believe that the appointment of any Race Relation Board, or Race Relation Commission, is going to help at all. Those are the outward and visible things. They might give a certain political kudos, but in the end these things are not truly beneficial and the whole issue has to be confronted by way of national debate, national understanding. People talk a lot about political will, but a real political will in this direction is to resolve this issue in the best interest of our country.

It is almost inevitable that a new Government tends to pay political debts. People who have helped that Government come to cash in their cheques and that is happening. I would dare my colleagues on the other side to say that people are not cashing in their cheques, that there isn't nepotism, that there are not people sitting in this Honourable House whose spouses and brothers and sisters and children are rewarded with jobs and places in our country. The great thing, however, is not to make this a way of life so that even if in the first blush of victory these things happen and people say: "*Well, it is understandable*", we must ensure that this does not become entrenched so that people who are worthy, by reason of their work, their training, their qualification, their dedication, their loyalty, feel that these things will not result in their preferment and advancement, do not feel that these are not the criteria for promotion.

Undoubtedly, Mr. Speaker, there is a great problem in the Public Service notwithstanding the many denials. The Public Service is being alienated because it is not being handled in a proper way. Too many people are resigning; too many skills are being lost because people believe that they are being targeted for victimization or harassment. Up to today we have had the resignation of an excellent officer in Mrs Pat Hinds, who was called by her Minister and told to sack a certain person. She preferred to resign rather than to do that. So, it is no use denying these things. I do not propose to spend the rest of my time getting into details. I want to deal with principles and I would not have that point if the Hon. Member did not purport to raise a question as to whether these things are happening.

Mr. Speaker, I am raising these issues in the context of development. The point I seek to make is this: our country is going to get nowhere very fast unless we can get all of our people moving together towards the goal of development and progress and they will only do that if they believe sincerely that they are operating in a milieu of social justice, fair play and equity. That milieu cannot be created if they perceive that there is discrimination, victimisation and a lack of respect for personal merit. That is the context in which I make these introductory remarks.

I was rather intrigued by the arguments, Mr. Speaker, that this Budget is a continuation of the policies of the PPP Government of 1953 and 1957-

64, because the record is clear that the PPP Government of those two periods brought this country to disaster. In 1964 we ended up in a state of civil war. People doubted whether we could survive as a social entity.

This situation which we encountered at the time was one of mayhem, destruction, arson, murder. It does not matter who exploited who. The situation was such that it was exploitable and it was exploited because the policies of the Government created the opportunities of exploitation.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** The very same things which people are alleging, characterise the nature of the Government in the early days. And all of this talk about economic management, good management, economic growth, development, development with a human face, must be the figment of somebody's imagination, because my colleague, the Hon. Member Dr. Kenneth King, was able to show by reference to the facts that these things were not so.

One of the areas in which great success was claimed was in the area of rice. We heard it here, in the course of this debate, but Mr. Speaker, let me tell Hon. Members that that was a disaster area. The PPP Government brought here its own economist, Rene Dumont, very acceptable to them because he was a socialist, and what he pointed out to the Government was that it was pursuing a ruinous course in the rice industry. It was expending acreages while yields were declining. And in his report, at page 7, he says as follows:

*"Rice yields, on the contrary",*

- and he was comparing rice with sugar -

*"showed a marked tendency to declining in quality as well as weight. At the same time the constant expansion of areas devoted to rice, partly to compensate the decrease in yields, tends to drive cattle away from the coast."*

That's a phenomenon that we are all familiar with.

*"In any case, it further reduces the already very low level of production."*

And so on.

As a result, we found that food production as declining and imports of food were increasing. And Dumont strikes this note in the very first paragraph of his report, where he says:

*“Food imports are rising rapidly while **per capita** output appears to be stationary for commodities intended for domestic consumption. Where meat and ground provisions are concerned, **per capita** production appears to have actually decreased.”*

So it is not true that the PPP was managing agriculture well. It is not true that agricultural yields were good. The policies were wrong-headed, they were ruinous as Dumont pointed so clearly. As in other ways the evidence of incompetence and inability to manage was clear. For Dumont, again talking about the Black Bush Polder, and this:

*“Nevertheless irrigation continues, water pouring out everywhere, at heavy and useless expense. Since 1971 it is estimated that three times the amount of water really necessary for the crop has been pumped in the Canje.”*

That is the evidence of this proper management of the PPP Government in the area of agriculture. And I could go on to illustrate this point by quoting from Wilfred David, enamoured of the Minister of Finance – he quoted him – but Wilfred David makes a very interesting point here at page 91 of his book *The Economic Development of Guyana 1953-1964*.

*“...that whereas the Ministry of Agriculture put out a projection that a farmer at Black Bush Polder should earn \$1,459 in net income annually, excluding family living expenses, in actual reality it turned out that he earned \$17.”*

Mr. Speaker, we are told about continuity. So, suddenly, from 1964 there is a quantum leap to 1992. What happened in the interim with the People's Progressive Party? The Minister of Finance would have us believe that this Party pursued a certain course of economic philosophy which is now burgeoning into the policies he is now developing. I don't know where he was. I could not say, Mr. Speaker, that he was hibernating, because I believe he was in a tropical country, so he had to be aestivating and now has awoken from his Rip Van Winklian sleep and doesn't quite understand what happened in the interim because the People's Progressive Party declared itself in 1984 to be formally a Marxist/Leninist Party.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Yes, but I changed.

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** No doubt about that. I have admitted to changing socialist orientation. I have said it in many speeches, but you don't have the courage to say so and you're still trying to bob and weave and hide behind a smokescreen of words. But the Minister is trying to, somehow or other, to mask this period as if it didn't exist.

So, we are told in 1984 that the PPP was then formally a Marxist/Leninist Party. We were told in 1985:

*“Socialism has not failed. Actually, socialism has not been tried in Guyana. The prerequisites for socialism have been laid. We say socialism is the future. With the PPP there will be a socialist Guyana.”*

And that’s from the PPP Congress Report to the Central Committee in August 1985.

We need to explain that paradox because, Mr. Speaker, what is happening is that in this Budget you see a number of contradictions. If you examine it carefully you will see that like all Gaul, it is divided into three parts. There are at least three hands in this Budget. One of the hands is the hand of the socialists, the wild men, who want to see a certain continuation of the socialist idea.

The other hand is the hand of the American technician who worked on the Budget and his hand is very clear. You read this Budget and see the number of American spellings in it. A man brought up in the British system isn’t going to write like an American. The third part is the Minister’s hand where he tries to steer the course which he knows to be technically correct. Well, I don’t know with three hands on the wheel how straight he is steering.

And what is more, Mr. Speaker, the very party which is now telling us about the glories of the IMF was the Party which abused the People’s National Congress for entering into an IMF Programme. Again, and I am quoting from the same 1985 document:

*“We say that the IMF is not the way out of the crisis. It only deepens and compounds the problem. Guyana must completely break off all relations with the IMF.”*

Mr. Speaker, we were treated to a learned disquisition by my good friend, the Hon. Member Dr. Henry Jeffrey. It was told to us that we were seeing a policy of discontinuity and he elaborated on this thesis. I admired his talk. It reminded me of when I was a young student sitting in the classroom. You listen to the lecturer and you are imbibing all of the learned words and his philosophizing. But, Mr. Speaker, what are the facts? What is the discontinuity? There is no discontinuity. This Government is following the policy framework of the People’s National Congress and I say so not without evidence.

I have here a copy of the memorandum of the meeting when Dr. Jagan visited the World Bank on the 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1992, a meeting facilitated by Mr. Asgar Ally, the now Hon. Minister of Finance who was present at the meeting. This is what Dr. Jagan told the World Bank officials.

*“Mr. Jagan, however, emphasized the need to cooperate closely with the international organizations, confirmed that his Party basically agreed*

*with the thrust of the ERP, and that his main issues with the Programme were basically on efficient government and equity, on social aspects."*

- and this is the amusing part in the light of all the talk that they were going to renegotiate the IMF Agreement, fooling people, telling people things that we know they couldn't do, telling people things that could not happen, that they didn't intend to do because they knew they didn't have the power to do them –

*"...and clarified that an earlier statement he had made regarding the need to renegotiate the existing Agreements with the IMF only meant that he wished to be part of the negotiating process as he did not know the details of the Programme, not that he would scrap the existing Agreements."*

Not that he would scrap them. And yet he comes here, telling people and putting in his Manifesto that he was going to renegotiate the IMF Agreement. So it is very clear, Mr. Speaker, that what we have here is a confirmation of the commitment made to the IMF and similarly to the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank in 1992 July, that the PPP, if it were to get into office, would continue the policies of the People's National Congress, and that is what they are doing.

All this talk about discontinuity, all this talk about new policies, all this talk about deviations, so much talk to salve their conscience and to deceive whom they could deceive, probably some of the neophytes on the other side, but certainly not us who are experienced in the ways of Government and understand how things work.

Mr. Speaker, this Budget claims that it has, as one of its objectives, the promotion of growth and development but the continuation of the growth and development which was initiated under the PNC can only be continued if there is new investment. There has to be continuing investment to sustain the momentum of growth. This Government has been saying and doing things calculated to scare away investment. At first he said he was going to renegotiate or revisit Agreements already entered into with investors. A lot of imprudent statements were made which caused concern in the international investment community, and these concerns were conveyed to the Government.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, this Government received a letter from the Overseas Private Investment Corporation warning it that unless it got on with settling certain matters in relation to American investors here OPIC was likely to withdraw its investment cover. That would be a terrible thing for us and a signal that would scare away the investment community.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, recently they have been leaking selectively aspects of Agreements entered into with investors to give a wrong and

distorted picture of what has happened, again disconcerting investors and leading to a concern that this Government might not be serious about investment. That is why His Excellency the President in his speech at the opening of OMAI was at pains to try to repair the damage he caused when he visited OMAI and spoke in October 1992. A *volte face* because it was brought home to him that the things which the Government was saying, the things which the Government was doing, were not calculated to help this country with its Divestment Programme. But it is interesting to note, in passing, that the Minister of Finance was unable to point to a single new investment that would bring revenue to the coffers of the public purse. All he could point to were projects, investment for which was made under the People's National Congress Government.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** You cannot poison the atmosphere of investment; you cannot make ambivalent statements about your interest in investment; you cannot scare people by issuing vain threats and then hope that people will be happy to come and invest, or will be happy to keep their investment here. What I am saying to the Government, Mr. Speaker, is that unless it gets its act together and makes sure it improves the investment climate by act and deed and words, it is going to be in for very serious times.

The interesting thing about this Budget, Mr. Speaker, is that it is more significant for what it has left out than for what it has said. This Government prides itself on transparency. That is the buzz word. Government says it is going to be transparent, it is going to share with the people and with this Honourable House, of course, all the information it has. We are going to get a blow by blow account of negotiations, we are going to be kept fully informed but, of course, the rhetoric is one thing; the reality is another. May I ask the Hon. Minister of Finance, within the context of transparency, why he has not chosen to lay in this Honourable House the PFP? Why is it not laid in this Honourable House? It is the duty of the Minister because had that document been laid in this House, the Policy Framework Paper, we would have had a better appreciation of the background to the Budget.

I try to understand what is the problem, because this Government is transparent, this Government is going to inform us, moment by moment, blow by blow. Why is it that this document is being hidden? I come to certain conclusions. Is it because it contains things that the Hon. Minister does not want this House and the people of Guyana to know? Is it because he does not want this House and the Guyanese people to know that he has committed himself to eliminating the GEC deficit of \$774 million this year which means that the tariffs are going to go up to that extent? They talk about reducing costs. They can't reduce any costs at GEC. The public will have to bear that increased cost.

Is it because, Mr. Speaker, he has committed himself to increasing drainage and irrigation rates? He doesn't want the farmers to know, so he hides the PFP? Is it because he has committed himself to privatise GUYNEC, GPC, Guyana Stores Limited, NEOCOL, GAC, Guyana National Cooperative Bank and the remaining rice mills? I do not have any problem with that. I am glad you are following my example but why not tell the people? Why are you hiding it?

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** You see, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister's party has said "*No divestment! Oppose divestment!*" but in its dealings with the IMF, it said it would follow the ERP and an important component of the ERP is divestment.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Well, your party is committed to selling out.

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Is it because, Mr. Speaker, the Minister has promised to consider the privatization of water, a sensitive commodity like that? Is it because, Mr. Speaker, the Minister has undertaken to work on the payment of fees for secondary schools and the University of Guyana and the hospital services? I am not saying that we are necessarily opposed to this. My complaint is that he has hidden these things from us in the House. He has hidden these things from the people at the time when he is presenting a Budget, and he says he is for transparency. Oh words! Words have lost their meaning and there is a new lexicon in which transparency means opacity.

Most important of all, Mr. Speaker – I would urge the Hon. Minister to be very careful on this one – he has promised to consider shifting the three transactions which remain in the Central Bank – fuel imports, sugar and official debt – to the Cambio market. That is there! That is what I am saying, Mr. Speaker.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** No, the Minister is confirming it. He is confirming what I am saying. I am urging the Minister to be very careful about doing that because I think that at this stage that would be a most undesirable thing to do. It is not in the best interest of our country and our economy.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** The Public Administration Project which the Minister agreed with IDA on the 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1993, why is that not disclosed to us? Why has it not been laid in the House? Where is the transparency? All I am saying is that we get a spate of words but when we come to look at the actualization of these words, we find that we can't find it. We cannot find these things. It is easy to talk, it is easy to indulge in rhetoric but when the time comes to deliver, the delivery is not there at all. I do not know again if it is because the Minister gave an undertaking to the IDA that if he did not get the co-financing from donors by the 2<sup>nd</sup> March, he would commit the counterpart funds from balance of payments support to this project. It might well be that he doesn't want that to be known. But then transparency has its own problems. You can't want to be transparent and at the same time not want to accept the difficulties which accompany transparency. To us transparency means that the people are going to know, they are going to know everything and you are going to be in trouble when they know certain things which they consider to be wrong.

I want to turn now to the question of investment because the Government's position has been completely contradictory. Somewhere in this Budget the Minister said that he was diverting funds away from the directly productive areas of agriculture, mining, forestry, to the social sectors. I do not accept that you are going to starve the productive sectors of money, you are going to upgrade the social sectors and you are going to get this growth which you require. I agree that we have to find money for the social sectors. I agree there must be a balance, but when you tell me that, in effect, you are going to starve the productive sector, you are going to divert money away from it, well then, I find a great deal of difficulty with that. But more than that. I have already referred to the need for continuing investments. I have already referred to the fact that the Minister has not pointed to a single new investment. I have already referred to the fact that the Government and its spokesmen are making statements that are causing concern in the international investment community.

More than that, the growth that is projected depends critically upon output which, in turn, depends upon electricity generation, and GEC is in shambles. Ever since they sacked Bovell, we are getting blackouts day after day after day. This is a fact. Bovell was not magic. He was a competent engineer. He was a professional person, well liked, well respected by the business community, and you bring a man very junior and you make him Manager. I have nothing to say about the gentleman except to point to his juniority and to point out that, whether it is coincidental or not, from the time Mr. Bovell left we have been experiencing a spate of blackouts daily in Guyana.

What is happening? They have loosed Rambo on the people at GEC, so Rambo is going around dismissing people. Four young people came to me.

They were dismissed summarily. By whom? By Rambo. He turns up and he hands them a letter of dismissal. *"What have we done?"* No explanation at all. What is worse, misinformation about the young lady who was dismissed is put into the newspapers, saying that some agricultural person was being trained as an accountant. There is nothing wrong with that. More than that, the young lady had a Master's Degree in Business Administration, but it was suppressed in the news item, so it was represented that the people there at GEC were doing craziness.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, there is need to pay attention to GEC. The situation there is bad. The situation there is deteriorating every day and the business community is getting very concerned about what is happening after it had reached a stage where it had become accustomed to an adequate supply, it is now facing a situation where the supply is below expectation. At the same time the Government is talking about increasing output, increasing productivity.

This Budget is a disincentive to the business community. While raising the income tax threshold, which is a good thing, it also increases the effective area of income tax and introduces a regressive regime which is one of the first things you learn when you sit down –

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** There is nothing proportional in that. It is a regressive rate, very regressive, despite what the Minister says, and it is going to cause a disincentive not only to professionals, people whom we are trying to attract back to this country but to other people who are attempting to really play a part in the economic development of this country.

The whole thing about the tax regime, the waivers, the increases and so on, is that you are reminded very much of the sleight-of-hand magician – hocus-pocus – because the waiver of taxes and duties on large buses has a story behind it. I was talking to a businessman who has just returned from Canada, and he told me that he was in conversation with a man who was the chief PPP mobiliser and raiser of funds in Canada, who explained to him that he and a group have a proposal before this Government, to bring in a fleet of 40 large buses to run a scheduled service. So the boys are being paid off. That is the truth of the matter. This is a political cheque being cashed.

How do you defend a situation in which you waive duties and taxes on a 40-seater bus, but the mini-bus has to pay imposts? How do you defend that? The small entrepreneur who is trying with a small transportation system, he is taxed, but the wealthier man who is able to buy a large transportation vehicle, he is not taxed. How do you defend that? What we

are seeing is a political pay-off which cannot be explained in any other way. No matter what the Opposition say.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** You see the point is that you all behave so much like the Opposition, that we get sometime ...

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** No matter what you say, these are hard facts. That doesn't worry me. I don't forget. I don't have a problem with that. People know that is the trouble. These things are not secret, people know. That is not a logo. I was talking to a businessman who came in for a few days and he was telling me this before the Budget came out and lo and behold, the Budget comes out and by some stroke of magic, the 30-seater bus is exempted from duty and consumption tax.

I want to say something about the wage increases, not so much about the scam, the 11 percent real increase, because that is based upon an assumption of a 9 percent rate of inflation. This is not going to happen because of the measures which the Budget has introduced and which are going to spur rather than contain inflation. I want to say that the wage and salary increase of 150 percent more than the former regime had programmed for 1993 is really an exercise in dishonesty.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** I had written to the press on this matter when it was alleged that the Minister had said that the PNC Government had agreed to a wage increase of 8 percent in 1993. I wrote saying that was not so. I pointed out that could not be so, that no proposal had ever come before the Cabinet and I challenged the Minister to produce the letter of transmittal, signed by the Minister, if this was so. I did not see any reply. But I still throw out that challenge because it is not so and for the Minister to have put that in his Budget Speech, doesn't speak well at all. I had denied this. I had pointed out it was not true and I think it would have been better if he had resisted the temptation to try to score this cheap political point.

The Chamber of commerce came out with a statement – This Budget -

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** - will impact adversely on workers, on business and on the economy. The Chamber of Commerce came out with a press release which is so apt and to the point that I think it should be read into the record of this Honourable House. The Hon. Member across the way asked what about

the GMA. I do not know that the GMA has issued any statement. One man did. The GMA had no meeting. The GMA issued no statement. The President of the GMA purported to make a comment on the Budget, but I am reliably informed that the President of the GMA was part of a delegation from the Chamber of Commerce which met the Minister since the publication of the Budget, that the Chamber of Commerce delegation was very critical of the Budget and that the President of the GMA joined in the criticism.

I feel that this statement should be read into the record:

*"The Chamber"*

- that is, the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry –

*"is shocked at the increase in the rate of corporation tax on commercial undertakings from 35 percent to 45 percent, an increase of more than 28 percent. It is difficult to justify the increase in personal taxation on highly skilled persons, having regard to the declared intention of the Government to attract them to and retain them in Guyana.*

*The increase in taxation on airline tickets from 10 percent to 15 percent is a disadvantage to Guyanese businessmen. **En passant**, the Minister's announcement on the competence of the Commissioner of Inland Revenue to prevent persons from leaving the country on the ground of alleged tax indebtedness could lead to the arbitrary denial of personal right to travel. It is alarming to note that Government projects an increase in the national debt of US\$55 million by 1996. It is unrealistic to expect employees in the Public Sector to perform efficiently, unless they are paid far more than the Government proposes.*

*The Chamber objects to the fact that all of its recommendations on the lowering of consumption tax have been disregarded by the Government. Indeed, the Chamber feels disappointed as it was encouraged, prior to the Budget, by the apparent openness of the Minister of Finance to its views. The whole tenor of the Budget is to reinforce the power of the parallel economy at the expense of legitimate business in Guyana. While the Chamber recognizes the attempts by the Government to assist the manufacturing sector, taken as a whole, the Budget is detrimental to the private sector and inimical to the continued economic recovery of the country."*

That is the end of the press release.

What is the dominant legacy of the Budget? It is frightening. The PPP/Civic Government projects that not only will the national debt increase by some US\$55 million more than when it took office, but the debt services will also be higher. With this projection, which I consider to be equally a threat, we can gauge the perilous road along which this Budget is taking

us, as a result of the PPP/Civic Government's inexperienced blunderings and ideological folly.

**[Applause]**

## **Motion on the Approval to Employ Members of the Guyana Defence Force Outside of Guyana: 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1994**

*WHEREAS Guyana is a Party to the decisions which emanated from the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community held in Barbados from 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> July, 1994;*

*AND WHEREAS the aforementioned Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM emphasised its recognition that the resolution of the political crisis in Haiti, a Caribbean country, is one to which all the countries of this geopolitical region, in cooperation with the international community in general, must make a meaningful contribution, and reiterated its readiness to do so;*

*AND WHEREAS the aforementioned Conference recognized the necessity of now considering the early implementation of all appropriate measures towards the resolution of the Haitian crisis, the resolution of the democratic process and the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to his rightful place as elected President of Haiti;*

*AND WHEREAS the aforementioned Conference agreed to provide assistance, in concert with other members of the international community, in the development of a civilian force as a professional organisation for maintaining the peace and respect for human rights in that strife-torn country;*

*AND WHEREAS the United Nations Security Council has adopted Resolution 940 (1994) on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1994;*

*AND WHEREAS the aforementioned Resolution recorded that the Security Council was gravely concerned by the significant further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Haiti, in particular the continuing escalation by the illegal de facto regime of systematic violations of civil liberties, the desperate plight of Haitian refugees and the recent expulsion of the staff of the International Civilian Mission (MICIVIH), which was condemned in its Presidential Secretariat of 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1994;*

*AND WHEREAS the Security Council by the aforesaid Resolution 940, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, authorised member States to form a multinational force under unified command and control and, in this framework, to use all necessary means to facilitate the departure from Haiti of the military leadership, consistent with the Governors Island Agreement, the prompt return of the legitimately elected President and the restoration of the legitimate authorities of the Government of Haiti, and to establish and maintain a secure and stable environment that will permit implementation of the Governors Island Agreement;*

*AND WHEREAS the aforementioned Resolution invited all States, in particular those in the region, to provide appropriate support for the actions undertaken by the United Nations and by Member States pursuant of this and other relevant Security Council resolution;*

*AND WHEREAS Guyana, being a Member of the United Nations, is obligated to abide by mandatory Resolutions of the Security Council;*

*AND WHEREAS Guyana participated in the Meetings of CARICOM policy makers and Heads of Military and Police Personnel regarding the implementation of Resolution 940;*

*AND WHEREAS the aforesaid Meeting agreed that those CARICOM Forces which will be participating in the Multi National Force (MNF), would concentrate on peacekeeping and reconstruction;*

*AND WHEREAS the aforesaid Meeting also agreed that such forces would only be deployed once a fair degree of stability had been established;*

*AND WHEREAS it is the collective intention of the CARICOM countries to participate in the MNF at approximately Stage 3 of the first phase of implementation of Resolution 940, that is, following the departure from HAITI of the military regime and the establishment of a fairly stable environment;*

*AND WHEREAS under section 7 of the Defence Act, Cap 10:01 of the Laws of Guyana, the approval of the National Assembly is required for the employment of any part of the Guyana Defence Force out of our beyond Guyana;*

**BE IT RESOLVED:**

*That the National Assembly hereby approves of the employment of troops of the Guyana Defence Force outside of Guyana to participate in the implementation of United National Security Council Resolution 940 in compliance with the decision of the CARICOM Heads of Government.*

**[The Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, it is easy to miss the point of a debate like this, but I believe that, overwhelmed by the number of 'Whereas' in the preamble to the Motion, the Hon. Foreign Minister ended up losing his way. The issue is not the justification for the United States action: the issue is the justification for deploying Guyanese troops into Haiti.

One would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that on a matter as serious as this, the Government would have taken some time to explain to the Guyanese people that there would have been a reasoned justification offered for involving ourselves militarily in the Sovereign State of Haiti. But this has not been done. This debate offered a last opportunity for the Government to do so, and it still has not been done.

I think it is correct to stigmatise the speech by the Hon. Minister as being one which reflects the confusion of thought and the lack of principle which mark the administration of the Government.

We have heard assertions bordering dangerously on the politics of personal expediency, certainly not of national interest. I note, in passing, that the Hon. Minister referred to consultations, I say, emphatically that whomever those consultations might have been with, they certainly were not with the People's National Congress.

On one occasion when I saw His Excellency the President on another matter, he mentioned to me that he had just come back from the CARICOM Summit and he explained the decisions taken with respect to Haiti. That was information conveyed to me, which I listened to politely.

A fortnight later I received a letter from the President inviting me to be briefed on the latest developments with respect to Haiti. I explained to the President that I did not agree that Guyana should be involved or that we

should send our troops there for reasons which I outlined. Now, neither of those meetings could be properly termed 'consultation' in any meaning of that word.

The Hon. Minister spent a lot of time telling us about the United Nations Resolution, but that is not a sufficient justification or reasoned explanation for involvement of Guyana. The Hon. Minister seems to believe that there was some compulsion as a result of this Resolution of Guyana to deploy troops. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, in the preamble to the Motion before the House there is a reference to Guyana being obliged to abide by a mandatory Resolution of the Security Council. No Resolution of the Security Council can compel any Member of the United Nations to send troops to another country. The United Nations, through the Security Council, can 'authorise'. That is the word of the Resolution. So that there is no question of mandatory obligation.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we come back to the question of some moral or vital national interest which impels us to involve ourselves in Haiti. I would submit that Guyana cannot reasonable find one. The truth of the matter is that the project to invade Haiti is an American enterprise. I have no doubt that from the vantage point of the United States administration, it had a self-interest. But the US self-interest cannot be confused with the self-interest of Guyana or any other country.

One has to consider what the Minister has said: "*The situation in Haiti is a threat to regional security*". That could not be true. There was nothing happening in Haiti which was a threat to the safety, the peace and security of our hemisphere or to the Caribbean Region. The problems were with the United States in terms of various statements articulated by spokesmen and spokeswomen for the US administration.

I am afraid the reasons given by the United States could be categorised as being really frivolous. We are told that the United States was bent on upholding democracy. Now, if that were a consistent and credible stance, one would understand it. But there was no interest in invading Brazil when the Generals rampaged in that large and powerful country. There was no interest in upholding democracy in Argentina when the Generals committed the grossest atrocities. There was no interest in upholding democracy in Chile when, again, the military seized power and we were told that there were all kinds of violation of human rights Mr. Speaker. That argument cannot stand.

We are told that the US is interested in upholding democracy. To refute this thesis, I can mention many countries in this hemisphere and throughout the world. Who is upholding democracy in Rwanda where there was a coup, or in Georgia, or in the Gambia or in Algeria? In fact, in Algeria the military aborted the elections to prevent the Muslim Fundamentalists from winning power through the ballot. The Government there is being supported by the Western Allies.

So that kind of justification, in principle, cannot stand. We are told, also, Mr. Speaker, that the flood of immigrants from Haiti to the US was a

matter which we ought to take cognisance of. The immigrants were not coming to Guyana. The Americans had a problem with immigrants. But if that were a justification for invading Haiti, well then, there is a greater justification for invading Mexico where the flood of immigrants into the US is unabated. There would be a justification for invading Cuba where a replay of Mariel was being witnessed only a few weeks ago.

The flood of refugees from Haiti had been stopped when the American Coastguard surrounded Haiti. That became a non-issue, and so when one looks at the whole situation, one cannot find that there is a principled position which would encourage us, or persuade us, to become involved in the action against Haiti. What emerged reminded me very much of what I used to read about where, in the days in the Indian Wars, commanders in the US cavalry would go out, try to pick a fight – the term they used was ‘to make coup’ – so as to raise their prestige and at the same time project power, the power of the Federal Government.

Why is Guyana a part of this unsavoury enterprise? Why? That is a question which ought to be answered by this Government to the satisfaction of the people. Is it pressure? Are we in a situation now when some foreign Government says to this Government ‘Jump’ and the only answer is ‘How high?’ Is it the hope to reward, Mr. Speaker? We know from our contact with Caribbean countries that the US has submitted a Memorandum of Understanding setting out certain reward. Indeed, one Caribbean politician made a premature announcement of this and a US spokesman said, “*No, no, no. This matter has not yet been approved*”. And he was right. Because the Memorandum of Understanding sets out a reward – some debt write-off, some soft loans – but then the very last clause says that all of this is subject to the agreement of the relevant Congressional Committee. So even the guarantee given is really no guarantee.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Foreign Minister seems to believe that history began three years ago. His point of departure was three years ago; but one cannot deal with the Haitian situation, one can formulate no fruitful or intelligent policy unless one has the sense of history. It is because the Spanish-speaking countries have a sense of history that they have distanced themselves from any enterprise to invade Haiti. Their historical sense tells them that this is something bad for the region. This is something that ought not to be promoted and certainly something they themselves ought not to be associated with. That is why, with the exception of the Argentine, there has not been any support for an invasion of Haiti coming from Brazil or the Spanish-speaking countries in our hemisphere.

The reason is, Mr. Speaker, that Haiti has a history of abuse and humiliation. Haiti was the first country in this hemisphere, after the United States of America, to gain its independence and like the United States of America gained its independence by force of arms. Unlike the United States of America, the independence of Haiti was gained by slaves

who had recaptured their human dignity and their humanity. From the beginning, Haiti was subjected to all kinds of pressures – military, economic, financial. Because Haiti was seen to have set a bad example she was never allowed to develop her institutions in peace. There was a continual assault on her and every opportunity was taken to batter and humiliate her by all the leading European powers, by Great Britain, France, Spain, Germany and latterly by the United States of America.

For example, Mr. Speaker, it was not until 1826 that Great Britain acknowledged the independence of Haiti after Haiti had signed an Agreement – let me call it an Independence Agreement – with Charles X of France and it was not until 1862 that the US followed suit. Imagine that! A country which gained independence in 1804 was not recognised as a sovereign state until 1862 when the slave lobby in the United States had begun to lose its influence!

Mr. Speaker, what happened in Haiti? For the first fourteen years, fifteen years, twenty years, Haiti was an armed camp. She had to devote her resources to acquiring arms and ammunition and building fortresses because of the real fear of continual attack by her European enemies. All these major powers combined to batter her. Apart from the general assault on her, one can point to specific examples of humiliation of this country. When other countries developing their institutions, albeit sometimes in a very bloody way in France and other European countries, when their people were groping their way towards political stability and development, this did not happen in Haiti because of all these pressures on her to which I have referred.

Mr. Speaker, as early as 1855, the United States seized the Navassa Island and it has not been returned to this day. In 1865, for example, there was the '*Bulldog* incident' in which a British warship (*Bulldog*) sank a Haitian vessel and fired upon the fortress at Cap Haitien. When the guns from the fortress replied and sank the *Bulldog*, the British dispatched a squadron to bombard Cap Haitien. This was part of the whole attitude of arrogance towards and contempt for this little country that had the presumption to be calling itself independent in a sea of slave colonies.

There were other incidents, Mr. Speaker. The Autran incident of 1877 in which a Spanish Commander (Autran) issued an ultimatum to the Haitian authorities because the Haitians had tried and convicted for an ordinary criminal offence a Spaniard from Spain and a Spanish subject from Cuba. Autran felt that that was disrespect towards Spain. Strangely enough he wanted the authorities to release the Spaniard from Spain but not the Spanish subject from Cuba because the latter was a refugee and had been involved in the struggle from the liberation of Cuba.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on with numerous incidents. The effort by the United States in 1889 when President Harrison sent a delegation to negotiate an agreement for a naval base at Mole St. Nicolas, a delegation that was accompanied by a squadron of 100 guns and 2000 marines. In

other words, the US was negotiating by putting the Haitians under an umbrella of fear through a projection of power. When Haiti refused because the Constitution forbade the alienation of land to foreigners, the American then went and acquired a base at Guantanamo in Cuba. And so today, Mr. Speaker, it is an ironic thing that some of the US forces which have gone to occupy Haiti came out of the naval base at Guantanamo.

While all of this was happening, while all these pressures were being applied, while Haiti was being subjected to all this humiliation, while her institutions were being distorted and the efforts to build them frustrated, the Haitian people were still making valiant efforts to stabilize their institutional life. We read of their efforts from 1806 to build a Constitution, to come to grips with constitutional government, very often in advance of what was happening in European countries. But these efforts could not have been successful. There was too much intervention, too much intrigue, too much pressure of one kind or another on the part of foreign powers.

We need to understand Haiti and Haiti's position in our part of the world. Haiti is a symbol of the independence of all the countries in this hemisphere. She has stood firmly for independence and sovereignty at a time when it was dangerous to do so. She supported the United States of America in the war with the British in 1812. The Haitians fought with General Jackson in New Orleans. Haiti gave succour to Bolívar and paid more than lip-service to his cause by giving him ships, ammunition and provisions to enable him to return to Venezuela and free his country. Bolívar's tribute to Haiti's President was most generous. In his letter to President Petion when he was leaving to liberate his country, he said, "*I do now know, I say, if I must declare that you are the author of our liberty*". Being a modest man, Petion replied, "*All I ask you to do is to liberate the slaves*". Bolívar went back and liberated his own slaves in Venezuela and, thereafter, worked to have the institution of slavery abolished throughout the Spanish-speaking countries.

It is said that history depends upon who owns the printing presses. Today we have to alter that statement a bit and say that history depends upon who owns the media, particularly the TV. You read about Haiti from those who own the printing presses. And what do you learn? Haiti is backward, they say. You learn about coups; you learn about voodoo; and you hear about superstition and tyranny and all that sort of thing. Everything is negative. Little has been told, little is projected, about Haiti's marvellous culture, very little about its beautiful paintings. Haitian paintings vibrate; they give an impression of being alive. You hear nothing about its sculptures, nothing about the poets and the authors and the men of learning that Haiti has produced. I am saying that Haiti had people who could have made a success of its institutional life except that success eluded them. They were not given the opportunity to succeed.

Among the worst incidents which have thwarted the development of Haiti, which distorted its social/political evolution, which set it back, was

the occupation of Haiti by the United States from 1915 to 1939. You get a sense of *deja entendu*: you heard it before. In 1915 the Treaty was signed under the threat of prepotent force. Prior to 1915, Mr. Speaker, US naval action against Haiti, took place in 1868, 1869, 1876, 1888, 1889, 1892, 1902 and in every year thereafter, through 1914, except the year 1910.

In fact, what was the justification for the invasion of Haiti in 1915? The historians say all kinds of things, including a belief by the US Government that the Germans might use it as a submarine base. But the official reasons given by the US were similar to the reasons given today. The goals were to restore political order. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has been telling us about providing a secure and stable environment in Haiti. It is the same thing the US was saying in 1915, namely, that Haiti was in disorder and, therefore, it was the mission of the United States to restore order, to impose democratic government and to promote economic prosperity. We have heard that before. Those were the reasons. They are nothing new. They are the same reasons that are being trotted out today.

The spokesmen for the US administration waxed eloquent, rapturous in their language, their language about what the occupation of Haiti was going to do. Admiral Caperton who in charge of the forces there said this:

*“Haiti will be a land free from violence as a result of this invasion. Justice and prosperity will mark the life of Haiti. The country’s fertility and possibilities will be developed. There will be plenty of work and good wages for the country’s peasantry and employment for the abilities and intelligence of the upper classes. It is easy to see that instead of misery and desolation, with misfortune knocking at every door, Haiti will be a land of honour, peace and contentment. Haitians will do all this for themselves. The United States will stand by as an elder brother to help and support.”*

That is what they were going to do in 1915. That was the justification. What was the result of the 19 years of occupation? This was succinctly presented by Professor Whitney Perkins in his book *Constraints of Empire*. He summed it up in these words. After nearly 20 years of occupation, he said:

*“The occupation works no miracles. Indeed, during the first five years and more, only the most, rudimentary tasks were accomplished ... Not all of this was well done. The financial advisers were regarded as incompetent.”*

And the Haitian Minister in Washington complained that no progress had been made toward the goal of a true transformation of the Haitian nation. Indeed, President Dartiquenave also complained that *“no effective aid had been brought to Haiti for the development of agricultural and industrial resources and no constructive measure had been proposed for the purpose of placing its finances on a really sound basis”*. A foreign power had gone into Haiti to

restore democracy; had gone in to promote peace and good order; had gone in to promote economic development. After twenty years, none of this had happened.

It is the same situation today, the same clichés are being articulated and the same cynical policies being pursued. They will come to nought. You cannot impose democracy:

“A gift of that which cannot be given  
By all the blended powers of earth and heaven.”

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** In 1915, we had the same propaganda that the troops were welcomed by the Haitian people with open arms; and yet, Mr. Speaker, within two to three years, the guerrillas, called the ‘cacos’, were in serious conflict with the United States marines. In 1918 some 2000 of them died in clashes with the marines. As usual, the books don’t tell us that casualties were suffered on the other side.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that the occupation of Haiti provoked a lot of uneasiness in the minds of thinking people in the United States of America; and in 1922, a group of prominent lawyers including such distinguished persons as Zachariah Chafee, Jnr., and Felix Frankfurter, compiled a report which they submitted to the Congress in the hope of persuading the Congress to withdraw the troops. And this is what the report said:

*“The methods employed by the United States in Haiti to force acceptance and ratification of the Treaty framed by the United States; namely, the direct use of military, financial and political pressure violate every canon of fair and equal dealing between independent sovereign nations and of American professions of good faith. The maintenance in Haiti of any United States military force or of the control exercised by Treaty officials under the cover of the Treaty of September 1915 amounts to a conscious and intentional participation in the wrong of the original aggression and coercion.”*

Mr. Speaker, the more things change the more they remain the same. We are facing the same situation, the same clichés are being trotted out and what the Americans are doing in Haiti under the guise of some multilateral force or what have you, will result in the same negative consequences which followed the 1915 – 1919 occupation.

There is nothing new in all of this.

[Interruption]

[**Dr. Patrick L. McKenzie:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the speaker be given another 15 minutes to continue his presentation.]

[Question put and agreed to.]

[The Speaker: the Hon. Member may continue.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, as I said: the same reasons, the same actions, the same consequences. I said to an American official some weeks ago that Haiti doesn't want guns and bullets. What Haiti wanted was a massive injection of development funds. He agreed with me and he said: "*you know, the administration is making provision for that*". I said "*Well, how much money?*" He said he didn't know. I said that the administration can say anything, but will the Congress approve? Everything depends upon the will of the Congress, and he conceded.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation in which the Congress is not behind the administration. The majority of the American people are not supportive of this adventure and, therefore, I submit that the American Congress is not going to vote large amounts of money to rehabilitate the Haitian economy and to build all these institutions that people are talking about, nor have we got any indication from the western powers that they are inclined to do that.

What we are seeing is a continuation of the pattern of history in this hemisphere. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the European powers struggled with the United States of America for hegemony. After the 1914 – 1918 War the Americans won out and this whole area became an American sphere of influence in which, like Sir Oracle, an American administration was inclined to say: "*I am Sir Oracle and when I open my lips, let no dog bark*". (That is genuine Shakespeare, not what the Hon. Minister quoted there just now.)

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** And so, you see, Mr. Speaker, in this struggle for hegemony, the USA – and, of course, prior to the USA there were Great Britain, Spain, France, the Dutch – deployed her naval and military might against almost every country you can think of in this hemisphere: Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Nicaragua, Peru, Panama, Brazil, Haiti. And so the story goes. What is happening now is a continuation of the past, not merely the application of the Monroe Doctrine. But think of all the misinterpretations and the distortion of the scope of the Monroe Doctrine. I believe that the caution of Brazil and the Spanish-speaking countries arises from a historic memory and an understanding of the evils of intervention in the affairs of a sovereign independent country. The rhetoric about human rights, democracy, development, are irrelevant to the dynamics of US policy; otherwise, the US would have been intervening in The Gambia and all those places where there are no human rights according to the American interpretation, where there is no democracy according to the American interpretation and where refugees are fleeing in their thousands.

Let me draw attention to one part of this Motion. This Motion says:

*“It is the collective intention of CARICOM countries to participate in MNF at approximately Stage 3 of the first phase of implementation of Resolution 940, that is, following the departure from Haiti of the military regime.”*

But General Cedras says he is not leaving Haiti. This Motion says that we are going to send our people in when Cedras has left. I have always wondered about the justification of anybody saying to a national of a country that he must leave his country. If anybody tells me to leave Guyana, I would laugh. That is the only country where I have a right to be; so I do not understand how Guyana could be part of anything which says that a man must leave the land of his birth, the only place where he has a right to be. And what? Travel around the world like the Flying Dutchman. I do not know.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons I have outlined, the People’s National Congress is against the occupation of Haiti by foreign forces, is against the participation of Guyana, through the Guyana Defence Force, in any such occupation under any guise whatsoever. We believe that the Haitian people should be allowed to work out their own salvation. The Argentinians, Mr. Speaker, faced a period of great terror and they worked out their salvation. The Brazilians eventually got the Generals to go. In Chile, General Pinochet is not the guardian of the democratic ideals of the state. Nobody told Pinochet to leave his country. People worked out their salvation. And my submission is that bayonets cannot enforce democracy and bayonets will hold up Aristide, or whoever, only for a limited time. It is the people of Haiti who have to work out their salvation.

I started out by saying that this was an American enterprise. We have seen that this agreement with Cedras and the others has been made without any consultation with, or involvement of, the United Nations and that the United Nations representative, Dr. Dante Caputo, has resigned in protest. It is clear that we are getting sucked into diplomatic matters that are beyond our ken. We are getting sucked into a quicksand of international diplomacy that we are not geared to cope with – and we are going to be embarrassed, Mr. Speaker, unless we take the position that we not are going to do whatever a foreign power tells us to do.

Guyana has not strategic or moral justification for being in Haiti. We are sending our troops into a situation that can bring them no glory. We are sending them into an enterprise that ultimately is a dirty enterprise. Guyana needs to be very careful not project itself as the conscience of the world. No country has that capacity to be the conscience of the world and certainly we are too small to be the bull boys of the world.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is ill-conceived. It is not in the best interest of Guyana and certainly does not help us to clarify a position for ourselves, a position that is honourable and logical in relation to the situation in Haiti.

**[Applause]**

## Motion on the Select Parliamentary Borders Committee: 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1994

*“Conscious that Guyana’s sovereignty and territorial integrity are non-negotiable issues of vital national interest:*

*Recognising that the defence of Guyana is the duty of all Guyanese regardless of political or religious persuasion or social status;*

*Taking into account the fact that the price of national security is external vigilance;*

*Noting that vigilance entails the constant monitoring of all aspects of relations with neighbouring countries, and especially those concerning sensitive border areas;*

*Aware of the need for a proactive and not a merely reactive response to such national concerns;*

*Recognising that the achievement and maintenance of the required level of vigilance can best be attained through the establishing of an appropriate national monitoring and evaluation committee;*

*Recognising that the competence of such committee would need to reflect the historical, political, diplomatic and national experience;*

*Be it resolved:*

*That a multi-party Parliamentary Committee of this Assembly be established to monitor, analyse and inform Parliament on matters pertaining to the integrity of Guyana’s frontiers; the said committee being empowered to invite persons from other organisations and institutions to assist it in its deliberations and activities;*

*And be it further resolved:*

*That this Committee shall be known as the Select Parliament Borders Committee.”*

**[The Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs]**

**[The Speaker: The Hon. Minority Leader Mr. Desmond Hoyte.]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, there can be no doubt at all that a multi-party approach to Foreign Affairs is a very desirable objective in our country. However, here again we have a classic example of discourtesy and non-consultation bordering on arrogance. We learnt, Mr. Speaker, by way of an article published in the *Stabroek News* on July 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1994, that the Government, according to the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs in a briefing to media editors, has agreed to establish a Select Committee of the Parliament on Border Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, we immediately, on that very day, sent a letter to the Hon. Leader of the House, pointing out that we were rather astonished that a statement like that should have been made in the media and that we should, for the first time, learn about it from the media, and in our letter of the 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1994, we said as follows:

*“It is unfortunate that we of the People’s National Congress should have learnt about Government’s decision to establish this Committee by way of a press article. Regrettably, this is not the first time that the media have been the source of information about a government proposal, in respect of which the Government expects our Party’s participation. Indeed I’m inclined to say that this has become a norm.”*

Then the letter went on:

*“I do believe that it would have been more courteous and it certainly would have ensured the possibility of a harmonious bi-partisan approach to what is undoubtedly a national issue, if there had been some prior consultation on Government’s intention, and an exchange of views on the scope of the committee and its terms of reference.”*

That is the end of the extract from the letter which I am quoting. Mr. Speaker. That letter elicited no response, not even an acknowledgement. The next development was the placing on the Order Paper of the Motion which we are debating.

We of the People’s National Congress would have wanted to know a number of things, so that when this Motion came here, issues would have been clarified and we would have been in a position to support it. For example, what precisely are the terms of reference of this Committee? Secondly, what is the scope of its authority? What access will it have to records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of other Government Ministries which might have an influence on its deliberations? How is this Committee going to be composed? How are we going to identify its Chairman? It is going to be another Select Committee with a PPP majority which would ensure that only a political line is taken rather than a national line? What value will be placed upon any reports or recommendations of this committee by the Government and, specifically, by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? Those are some of the things which we would have liked to sit down with the Minister and have clarified. Instead of that, no response to a letter, no acknowledgement, complete act of discourtesy and then the Minister comes here and really expects us to go along with this Motion. The Minister, unfortunately, has destroyed the Foreign Ministry, has denuded it of talent and the result has been that that Ministry is a disaster area.

Recently we had a very serious issue on our border. Mr. Sucre, the Commissioner of Geology and Mines, some GDF officers in mufti, and some miners were arrested on the border by the Venezuelan military, taken inland and incarcerated. This is a matter of great public concern, Mr. Speaker, if we are to believe the media – and there has been no denial – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did nothing. In fact, in the *Stabroek News* of September 7 the Hon. Minister is reported as saying that neither Government became involved during any part of the negotiations, that is, the negotiations to have these people released. In fact, what really

happened was that the miners had to spend money to go across to Venezuela, get assistance from their counterparts there to have these Guyanese citizens released. Now that is an alarming development. So what is that the Minister would want us of the People's National Congress to do?

He would have, first of all, to strengthen his Ministry in an appropriate way, to lift its morale and to have the talent necessary to advise and support any Parliamentary Select Committee. At present they don't have that. We are not about to be part of any Committee to endorse nonsense that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs might be doing on the foreign affairs field. So, Mr. Speaker, while we remain committed to a multi-Party approach to foreign policy issues, we must say that the proper foundation has to be laid and, until such time, the PNC will not be used as a tool or a convenience to give a colour of legitimacy, so to speak, to the blunderings of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As far as we are concerned, this Select Committee is a non-starter and I would say again, Mr. Speaker, it remains very much of what was said of the Bourbon princes who learnt nothing and forgot nothing, it seems to me that on the Government benches they are very much like the Bourbon princes.

They don't seem to be learning that the Members of the Opposition are not here to be disregarded. They are not here to be treated with discourtesy. If the Government wants to go along by itself, it can do so but if it seeks the support of the Opposition Parties, it must at least do them the courtesy of consulting with them and giving them a chance to express a point of view.

**[Applause]**

# Motion on the Approval of the Appointment of a Special Select Committee To Review the Constitution: 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1994

*“Whereas Government recognises the need for and is committed to constitutional reform;*

*Be it resolved:*

*That this National Assembly approve of the appointment of a Special Select Committee of the Assembly to review the present Constitution of Guyana and make proposals for its reform and that the Committee be hereby empowered, in the exercise of its functions, to invite and receive memoranda from the public – individuals as well as organisations – and to receive evidence and such advice as it considers appropriate;*

*And be it further resolved:*

*That the Committee report to the National Assembly before the date when National Selections are next due.”*

**[The Senior Minister of Agriculture]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the response to this Motion ought to be, and will be, quite brief, I cannot think of a public enterprise or project which is of greater national importance than constitution making and, for that purpose, one would have thought that the Government would have sought to mobilise the support of Opposition Parties, social partners and all the Guyanese people for such a national project.

Unfortunately, the way in which the Government has proceeded has been both unwise and inappropriate. There has been no consultation and I would have thought that it would be foolhardy for any Government to propose a Motion like this without having some idea as to the kind of parliamentary support it is likely to receive.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that we are thoroughly committed to the concept of constitutional reform. It was in our agenda. What we are opposed to is the method and the manner in which the Government has proceeded and, for the record, I would like to deal with this matter.

By letter dated May 30, 1994, Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, the Hon. Minister, sent a letter to Mr. Robert Corbin, the General Secretary of the People’s National Congress, I would like to read that letter and have it incorporated in the *Hansard*. The letter goes as follows;

*“Dear Mr. Corbin,*

*I am forwarding to you a copy of the proposed Motion to set up a Committee to review the Constitution. The Government will like to introduce the Motion at the earliest opportunity.*

*With best regards”*

Attached to this letter was a copy of the draft Motion which has appeared, today, on the Order Paper of this Honourable House. Nothing further was heard. You will see, Mr. Speaker, that from this letter one could only conclude that this was a letter of notification of what the Government intended to do.

The next happening, Mr. Speaker, was that there reappeared in the *Stabroek News* of October, 16, 1994, what purported to be an interview given by His Excellency the President to a journalist of that newspaper and I would like also to read it verbatim so that there could be a proper record of it.

*“Question posed to His Excellency by the **Stabroek News** journalist:*

*In your Manifesto, you reorganised the urgent need for constitutional reform including the reduction of the powers of the President. Though two years have passed not much progress has been made in this direction and many have seen this as a key element in the democratic renewal.*

*Response by His Excellency the President:*

*Again, I would like to say that we are committed to constitutional reform. I have said so over and over. Maybe we didn't move fast enough at the beginning, but if it is delayed now, it is not our fault. A proposal has been with the Leader of the Minority for nearly two or three months. I am anxiously hoping to get it out of them so that we can move on.”*

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that that was most inaccurate. No proposal has been submitted to me by His Excellency the President or by any other person. In those circumstances, my Party was compelled to issue a press release the following day on the 17<sup>th</sup> October, pointing out the inaccuracy of this statement in the *Stabroek News* and setting out a copy of the letter which I have just read.

This is not away to proceed with a matter as important to the people and the future of this country as constitutional reform. Sometime last month – I think on the day before I was scheduled to leave this country for the United States of America – His Excellency the President telephoned me and asked whether my Party could submit its views on this Motion. I told him that I was about to leave the country, but I would leave instructions for my colleagues to have a look at it. We had already made it abundantly clear that we were opposed to this method of proceeding through a Select Committee because, like the Hon. Member who moved the Motion, we are satisfied that this project should involve as many people as possible. It should be a national project involving as far as practicable as many Guyanese as possible.

The next development was that this Motion was placed on the Order Paper of this Assembly. Now, where is the consultation? Where is the effort to try to get the Political Parties, in the first instance, to have a common approach to the mechanism for constitutional reform or change? There was none.

The People's National Congress calls for widespread public consultation and involvement; we believe that the process should involve, first of all, the sensitising of the Guyanese people to the issue of constitutional reform. What the Motion proposes is not the best approach. In fact, it is an unfruitful approach to merely submit a Motion for a few people around here to decide in their wisdom that that is the mechanism they are going to foist upon the Guyanese people. We say that, first of all, there should be – and this is a task initially for the Government, though all of us should be involved in it – the approach of sensitising the people through the media and other ways and we should use that as a prelude for initiating a national debate. There should be lectures, seminars, workshops and discussions throughout the length and breadth of this country – all of that leading up to a mood of cooperation and involvement which will lead towards a final result with which we all could be happy. That has not been done. We feel that the whole approach has been quite wrong and quite wrong-headed.

The Hon. Member made some unfortunate references to the PPP's involvement in constitution-making. I don't want to spend a lot of time on that. I treat this as a side excursion. But I remind him that in 1958 his Party objected to the involvement of the public and, in fact, when Mr. Burnham moved a Motion, seconded by Mr. Tasker –

*"Be it resolved:*

*That the Constitution Committee invite memorandum from the public – "*

- that Motion was negated, and the PPP proceeded to decide that the question of constitutional reform should be dealt with *in camera*. They did not want memoranda; they did not want public involvement. When there was a famous 'gasoline constitution', I think those of us who were around at that time will remember the rather unfortunate remark by the then Leader, and still Leader of the People's Progressive Party, now His Excellency, the President of the Republic, said that he did not want every Tom, Dick and Harry pronouncing on constitutional matters, that he was not prepared to listen to crackpots. "*Surely we know*", he said, "*that there are certain crackpots in this country like Ifill and Tommy Bourne and others. Why should Members of the Legislature waste their time listening to such people? We are talking about constitutional reform.*" And, then, he went on to say, "*If the Hon. Member for Ruimveldt (that is, Mr. Burnham) wants to waste time, he has the time to waste, then he can do so. We on this side of the House have not that much time to waste.*" That is *en passant*. I mention this merely to scotch the remark – that the PPP

has been this open Party receptive to public involvement, it is not. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we are so particularly concerned that this matter should get off on the right footing.

We are opposed to the Motion, because we believe that the groundwork has not been done. We are supportive of the idea and the objectives of the Motion but we believe that there should be a proper process of consultation and involvement. We would recommend, Mr. Speaker, that the Hon. Minister should consider withdrawing this Motion and starting immediately a proper methodology of consultation with the Opposition and with other forces in this country. Mr. Speaker, I think if that were to happen, we could proceed very rapidly with the whole question of constitutional reform.

## Motion of the Sympathy on the Death of Mr. Hubert Jack: 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1994

*“Whereas Mr. Jack Died On Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> July, 1994;*

*And Whereas Mr. Hubert Jack has rendered long, dedicated and distinguished service to Guyana, servicing in the capacity of a Minister of the Government and Member of Parliament and later as an Ambassador and High Commissioner of the Republic:*

*Be it resolved:*

*That this National Assembly records its deep regret at the death of Mr. Hubert Jack and pays tribute to the distinguished service which he has rendered to Guyana and the Parliament.*

*And be it further resolved:*

*That this National Assembly direct that an expression of its sympathy be conveyed to his sorrowing wife and family.”*

**[Mr. Hugh Desmond Hoyte (Minority Leader)]**

**[The Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr. Hugh Desmond Hoyte.]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, it is with great sense of sadness and personal loss that I beg to move the Motion standing in my name in connection with the death of Mr. Hubert Oliver Jack.

Mr. Jack was one of those rare persons possessed of an equitable temper with a great capacity for friendships and for reconciling differences. He served the people of this country over an extended period of time with great charm, wit and distinction; and though, being human, there must have been times when he might have become ruffled and lost his temper I personally cannot remember any such occasion.

Like all ambitious Guyanese in the old days he sought to broaden his horizons by going to the United Kingdom after leaving school and serving a stint in the Civil Service. In the United Kingdom he worked and pursued the study of the profession of the law, retiring to this country in 1956 where he entered into private practice. It was not long before he became involved in politics, but even before he became involved in politics he was very active in the intellectual life of Guyana. In 1969 he was appointed Minister without portfolio; from 1971 to 1973 he was the Minister of Mines and Forests; from 1973 to 1980 he was Minister of Natural Resources; and from 1980 to 1983 he was Minister of Energy and Mines.

One of the characteristics of Mr. Jack was that he was an accessible person, always approachable by the highest and the lowest in the land. I think it was the consensus that, in all the Ministries in which he served, he was able to add a new dimension to their work and their contribution to the development of our country.

In 1983 he became Ambassador to Brazil and subsequently he served as High Commissioner in Canada and in all of those appointments he served with great distinction. He was a very witty person who had a great capacity for humour, for conversation. As I have said before, he had a way of being able to reconcile differences.

He was widely read, had a profound knowledge of philosophy and history, politics and literature, but he carried his vast learning very lightly, it took me a long time to realise the depth of the knowledge and the information of which he was possessed. I believed that Guyana owes a great debt of gratitude to this great son.

His passing so suddenly came as a surprise to many of his friends, who did not know that he was ill. He died at a time when he had just made final preparations for returning to settle in the land of his birth and I believe that he was looking forward with great enthusiasm to coming home, being among his friends and picking up once again the old course of his life.

I move, Mr. Speaker, that this Honourable House join with me in expressing condolences to his family on this passing, expressing our appreciation for the life and work of Hubert Oliver Jack.

## Motion on the Approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for 1995 Budget Debate: 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1995

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister of Finance, with a brashness that amounted to *chataprat*, told this Honourable House that the Budget gave an opportunity for the Government to transform its vision into tangible Programmes and Projects for helping and benefiting all the people of this country. But we were told the same thing in the Budget Speech in 1994. There was the same talk about a 'vision' and, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the word 'vision' has become the term of choice for people who don't want to apply themselves to the rigours of intellectual analysis or to be meticulous in the presentation of a policy or a case. So it is easy to take refuge in the term 'vision'. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, there is a lack of coherence and focus in the 1995 Budget as indeed there has been in the Budgets of '93 and '94.

The Christian scriptures tell us that "*you young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams*". But this vision of which the PPP speaks is something that is peculiarly secret. Nobody knows what it is. The mere words are expected to convey to content. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable House need not take my word for it. This was the opinion of Dr. Umea Lele, who was brought to this country to do work for the Government. She wrote the President's speech for the Consultative Group meeting in January 1994 and she was the lady who was supposed to head the team to write a Development Programme for the people of Guyana. In her report, Mr. Speaker, she said about this 'vision' that "*Government does have an implicit vision of where it wants to go, but it has not been fully articulated or shared even in the Government.*" Dr. Umea Lele has great sense of humour. What she is saying is that there is confusion, because you can't have implicit vision. Being a polite and highly professional lady, she explained the situation in the words which I have quoted.

I want to say in all seriousness to the Hon. Members on the Government Benches, that while they and their colleagues are having a vision, the ordinary people of this country are having a nightmare – what with skyrocketing prices, rising cost of living, high crime rate, unemployment, bad housing, pervasive corruption and the great fear arising from widespread victimisation and a sense of personal insecurity.

All of these things, Mr. Speaker, are the reality in Guyana today. The Budget lacks integrity, and it has the same flaw which marred the Budgets of 1993 and 1994, in that it is a hotchpotch of allocations, devoid of internal coherence, and having no relevance to any kind of philosophical construct. Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this Budget is not to illuminate but to obscure. It is more notable for what it did not say, than for what it said, because the Hon. Minister seems to feel that the Budget speech is

an opportunity for verbal wizardry, to camouflage the poverty of thought which went into its construction.

Every year we hear the same story, but with different words. And what is remarkable is that the several statements made in the Budget are difficult to reconcile one with the other. Many of them cannot coexist with truth or reality. Mr. Speaker, lest someone says that I have made a general statement and I don't try to give some examples of what I am talking about, let me just have a quick run through some things which were said in the past and some things which have been said in this Budget Speech, and relate those to the observations I have made.

We are always told that certain things will happen. The Budget sets its targets; it sets its objectives; and we would like to believe these things, but, Mr. Speaker, how can we believe when it turns out in the long run that these things have not been done. In 1993, the Hon. Minister told us that, henceforth, he was going to present a three-year forward-looking Budget, revising and orienting away from line items towards activities and Programmes. An excellent concept to have a rolling three-year Budget – but, it hasn't happened. He told us that he was going to put in place incentives to attract overseas Guyanese into the Public Service. It hasn't happened. He told us that he was going to review the fiscal incentive regime to attract investments. It hasn't happened. He told us that he was going to waive all tax on all imports for the production of local consumer goods. It hasn't. He said, extraordinary enough, that he was going to reduce the cost of basic foodstuffs by certain measures which were going to be put in place. I wouldn't comment further on that.

Having abandoned the promise in 1994 to provide low cost houses, he told us that the Government was going to regularise 4,000 squatting areas a year. I am prepared to concede that even that might be an error. I am prepared to concede that it might be 400 or 40 or 4, but the fact of the matter is that not a single squatting area has been regularised in this country in the year 1994.

We were told that the rate of growth in inflation would have been eight percent. My colleague, the Hon. Member, Dr. King, scoffed at this. He pointed out that it was just not possible as an achievement. The Hon. Members on the other side defended the position stoutly but what has happened? More than double the number given has been the final rate of inflation. We were told, Mr. Speaker, that the Ministry was going to deal in a comprehensive and conclusive manner with liabilities under the External Payments Deposit Scheme. It hasn't happened. We were told that the Ministry was going to set up a Revenue Board and Tax Court with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1995. It hasn't happened. And so it is.

However, Mr. Speaker, we would like to believe what is written in the Budget, but the objective facts are against our believing and so, in 1995, the Minister, having learnt wisdom and the undesirability of making these specific promises, reviewed the Public Sector Investment Programme in a

very cursory way. There is no attempt to analyse the performance, but he tells us that the Private Sector Investment in 1994 was \$9.8 billion. Mr. Speaker, it pains me to have to say that when the Minister told us that he got this number from the Private Sector Commission, that that was an error. A slip of memory I would like to think. And this was repeated by the Hon. Junior Minister. We would like to believe the statements coming from the Government Benches, but every time we believe, we are disappointed because our belief has been shown to be not well founded.

A Budget presentation must be credible. Once it is credible, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House will be prepared to give it maximum support, because it is not true that it is only the PPP Members who have patriotism and a sense of nationalism. If you listen to some PPP Members talk, you would feel that they have a stranglehold on patriotism and nationalism. I want to say to the Hon. Members that we are as interested in the development of this country as any of them.

The Minister spoke of extensive consultation in forming the Budget, he really forgot the People's National Congress. He forgot the political Opposition, because I gather from the representatives of the other Parties that they, too, were not consulted. To the extent that we were left out, the Minister deprived himself of a very important pool of knowledge, expertise and experience.

The Government is still driven by too much fear and suspicion. Too many Members on the other side, believe that every citizen who is not a PPP enthusiast, is conspiring against the Government. And that is just not true. I went to the United States of America, and I was denounced on my return as being 'anti-national', 'unpatriotic' and wanting to 'destabilise the Government', of 'bad mouthing' the Government. But, what I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is that I have more constructive use for my time –

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** If the Government believes that I am going to isolate myself, or that I am going to isolate my Party in this hemisphere, well, then, it has a rude shock coming. I do not believe and do not accept that in this modern world in which we live, any political leader, any Political Party, any Government which wants to survive and prosper can afford to isolate itself. I have no obligation to the Government, but I do have a deep and profound obligation to the people of this country –

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** The Hon. Prime Minister will tell you that when I returned from my last trip, I brought to his attention the fact that the World Bank, with whose officials I spoke, has a facility for helping countries to strengthen their legal systems. I am, therefore, particularly pleased to hear the Hon.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs talk about the Justice Improvement Project which has got in the way. I know that. What I am saying is that the World Bank also has a facility, and that the Head of Department, Mr. Roberto McLean, explained to me that the Bank has been active in this field, in many parts of the world. I brought back that information for the benefit of the Hon. Prime Minister –

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** That is how I see my duty, not to denigrate this country but to help, in whatever way I can, to promote its best interests.

What I want say, Mr. Speaker, is that it is time that the Government gets over its paranoia and deals with Opposition Parties and all the social partners in this country on the basis of openness and good faith. If it were to do that, I am sure that it would open the way for a national consensus that has a real chance of realising the triple objectives which the Hon. Minister of Finance sets out in his Budget Statement. Once the Government is prepared to proceed with good faith initiatives, it will find us in the People's National Congress always receptive.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the three themes of the Budget Statement, to use the Minister's phrase, are: "*sustaining economic growth; rebuilding physical infrastructure; and alleviating and reducing poverty*". Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, these objectives, desirable as they are, cannot be realised, unless the Government metamorphoses itself, unless the Government undergoes a drastic change, because the popular perception is that the Government is inept, unjust, discriminatory and is bent on promoting divisiveness in our country. These things are seen as insurmountable barriers to progress. I say that there is a perception abroad, and every perception is a reality to be confronted and to be dealt with. I want to say that the various objectives will continue to be a mere wish-list, unless we create the national climate in which all the people – Government, Opposition Parties, the various social partners, the people in field, in office and factory, all the people in this country, feel that these are objectives towards which they can work in an environment in which they are happy, safe and secure.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that in terms of the first objective of stimulating economic growth, we need to create a suitable climate to generate large investments on a continuing basis. That is the key. Without investment, the economy is going to decline. If you look at the figures, if you look at the numbers, you will see that we have reached a plateau, and we are not going to go any further in terms of growth. As a matter of fact, the Minister, himself, seems to have accepted this because he is projecting a

6.3 percent rate of growth for 1995. Unfortunate statements by the leadership of the Government have not been helping, and inexplicable fiscal policies have confused business people.

It was only yesterday that the Chairman of the Private Sector Commission was asking for some kind of coherence in our tax arrangements. Poor administration has been frustrating business people and would-be investors. I talked with people inside and outside of this country – some of them who do business and some of them who want to do business – and they are put off by the administrative problems they encounter. Mr. Speaker, these are the things we have to address. These are the conditions we have to improve to create the necessary climate for investments.

I will make a point, I make it without apology – we've been making it time and again, and it is true: Since the PPP took office, there has not been a single major new investment in the country. That is because of the things that I have just referred to, and also because of the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the Government, through clumsiness, has caused the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, which is the US Federal Government Agency that insures American Investment abroad, to suspend its operations in this country. In other words, at present this country cannot get American Investment because OPIC has suspended its operations. We have to deal with these matters.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** They did not suspend their operations under the PNC Administration.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most frightening of things that has been scaring off investment is this unwise threat to reopen investments already made. This Government talked about reopening OMI's contract. It talked about reopening BARAMA's contract. But there is a profound silence on GT&T. That is an American investment. *"Tom drunk but Tom ain't stupid"*.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, we need, therefore, to create a proper environment. We need to try and get a national consensus as to what that investment in environment should be so that all of us, every single Guyanese, can go out into all parts of the world and talk about investment climate and investment opportunities in this country with great confidence.

Mr. Speaker, it is not only that private investment has not really becoming forth in the magnitude which is necessary to stimulate the economy at this time. I think that the Minister's approach has been misguided because in 1993 he told us that the Government intended to re-allocate development resources from direct productive sectors to the

social sector. That is a cardinal error because you are not going to be able to finance activity in the social sectors unless you get the money from the productive sectors; and so, at present, since sufficient money for the productive sectors is not coming from the private sector, the Government is left in a trap where resources are going to social services which are depending upon the generation of wealth by the productive sectors to sustain themselves. Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Minister would look seriously at this policy thrust of his, and would look seriously at ensuring that there is greater encouragement to the private sector.

I say this, Mr. Speaker, in the light of the tax regime. Business people like, as far as possible, a measure of certainty. It is not productive or helpful for the Minister to promise that Consumption Tax (CT) waivers will be granted and then they are not granted. It induces an idea of discrimination when, CT, duties and other imposts are waived on big buses, but are imposed on mini buses. It generates a perception of unfairness which is not going to help in creating business confidence.

We said in 1993 that the upgrading of Corporation Tax on non-commercial companies from 35 to 45 percent was an error. We said, again, that the abolition of tax holidays as an investment incentive was a mistake. We will say that, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Finance was doing these things within the framework of the comprehensive reform of the tax regime and of the incentive regime, we would have understood; but I think it does not make too much sense to pluck out an incentive here and there without granting a compensating benefit. It is simply not true that the income tax holiday *per se* is not a great attraction for investors, as the Minister believes.

Mr. Speaker, when we come to 1995, I would like to raise the question on the \$10 Environment Tax which is proposed. I think my colleague, Mr. Murray, raised the question and I would like to reinforce that question. Is this money going to be put into a fund for environmental purposes, for promoting environmental policies? Because if it is not going to be put into a fund for that purpose, well, then, this is a deception and this is another fiscal measure merely to boost the revenues in the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Speaker, we need at this time to create a clear and comprehensive tax regime because I am sure that the Minister and his technicians at the Ministry of Finance will admit that businessmen raise this matter all the time. There seems to be, Mr. Speaker, a certain lack of, should I say, understanding of tax principles. In fact, the proposed taxation on bets is a case in point. Now, if the purpose is a moral one to dissuade betting, I understand it. If it is a revenue measure *per se*, then I do not understand it. One would have expected that there would have been a tax on winnings, not on the bet itself, because, in this case what is going to happen? You are going to drive the punters underground. They are not going to pay the tax because they are not stupid, they will understand that they are in a no-win game – well, betting is a no-win game in any case, as far as I am

concerned but they will know that they are in a worse position, if they have to pay this tax. I would therefore ask the Minister, to look at this matter so that we can have some kind of understandable principle running through our fiscal measures in this country.

Recently, I was looking at a programme on the TV, and the chairman of a local company was saying some very alarming things about the way in which consumption taxes have been impacting on beer. I made some careful notes while he was talking, and said to myself if these things are true, well, then, the Ministry would need to look urgently at the matter. I would concede that very often when taxes are imposed you don't always anticipate the impact which they might have in various sectors of the economy and on various manufacturers. In this particular case, the argument is that in 1994 the tax on beer was multiplied 1000 percent. As a result prices increased and sales fell but the demand was supplied by beer smuggled from neighbouring countries. I go around the country and I see this contraband Polar Beer all over the place. In fact, I was astonished on one occasion to see a signboard where the man was proudly proclaiming that he was an agent for Polar Beer.

Having regard to what is happening to our local production and the impact of this Consumption Tax on the locally manufactured beer it may be that something urgent should be done to re-think the situation.

Now, the second objective of the Budget, Mr. Speaker, has to do with administrative reform and rehabilitation of physical infrastructure. It is a very sad thing that the Government seems to have abandoned the Public Administration Project. That Project was designed to streamline and modernise the Public Service; but most important of all, and fundamental to the re-designing of the Public Service, was the question of pay. This project has been abandoned. One of the things I remember about the project was that salaries were to be decompressed. It seems to me that salaries have been further compressed, contrary to the objectives of the Public Administration Project. The Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs tells us that a lawyer in his Chambers starts at \$13,000. Mr. Speaker, a few nights ago, my car stopped at a major road. A man came up to me. Obviously he wasn't in the most affluent circumstances and he asked me to give him some money to buy a meal. I didn't have any money on me, so I told my closeman to give him something. He gave him \$100, and the fellow sucked his teeth. He said that at some restaurant somewhere a meal is \$500. That is the reality. A beggar is refusing \$100 because his meal, he says, will cost him \$500. But, Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness, this is a most important matter. We know that the Public Service is understaffed. We know that people are leaving every day.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Well, you continue to drive them out if that is your policy. There are cases where people leave the Public Service and then they

are re-hired as Consultants at ten times the salary they were getting. But more than that, Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a lack of control in the Public Service. I know twelve cases of people who are being paid and are doing nothing. It is not that they don't want to do anything. They don't have a desk or a chair because somebody in the Ministry believes that he is victimising those persons.

There is the case of the Custom Officers, six of them, who were to be reinstated, after the Public Service Commission has issued a G.O., who, some two years later are, still not reinstated. I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that in these cases, the Government needs to make a decision. A situation like this affects morale and makes the Civil Service look bad. All of these things are publicly known. They are known in Guyana; they are known outside, we who have to deal with Government Agencies know that there is a very low morale in all Government Departments. We have to reform the Public Service. I do not think that the Government can get away from the question of pay. It might be a tough decision to decide that you are going to pay your top managers adequate salaries, but I want to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the Government will have to do that. It will have to take those tough decisions so that it can attract suitable people, because, without them, the whole system will run into chaos.

If I may, I will return to what Dr. Umea Lele said in the same document I referred to earlier on, commenting on the Public Service. She said:

*"There is a lack of capacity to organise, delegate and get things done in a timely fashion or to utilise valuable external inputs".*

That is true, because, Mr. Speaker, in the IDB newsletter of November/December, 1994, the IDB pointed out that Guyana was unable to draw down \$25 million because of an inability to get on with project implementation, and Dr Umea Lele, who was very close to the Government, and had access to a lot of information, said in her Report:

*"Needless to say..."*

that is, after she had referred to the fact that the Public Service was in a bit of a shambles.

*"... Government implementation is slow. Currently \$150 million of commitment from the IDB alone which remains to be disbursed, at least \$50 million of those will be cancelled by the donors."*

Now, the International Financial Agencies like to say about developing countries that they don't have 'absorptive capacity'. That is the 'buzz word'. They don't have absorptive capacity. But I think that in our Public

Service we have people of talent; we have people who are experienced; we have people who have knowledge to handle these matters; but they need to be inspired with confidence. If they look around and see people bolting through the door, if they look around and see less talented people getting two and three times their salaries, they become disenchanted and it becomes difficult to get them to do their best.

Mr. Speaker, the third objective is poverty alleviation. Now, this is just not possible in the absence of a national consensus. A Government, by itself, cannot devise, much less implement, a national Poverty Alleviation Programme. We do not have a Programme in the Budget. What we have is a list of twelve disparate Programmes or Projects which, somehow or other, the Government feels are going to cohere. It is not going to happen. It doesn't happen like that. Poverty Alleviation Programmes, first of all, require national involvement, and that national involvement can be obtained if there is a national consensus at the level of the Political Parties and social partners, and there needs to be comprehensive interlocking Programmes which are as the Kenyans devised. I have here in my hands, Mr. Speaker, a Poverty Alleviation Programme which consists of a set of projects, which the Kenyans put together and have sent to the European Commission for financing. When you look at what they are doing, and what they propose, it makes so much sense because it involves all the things the Minister has been wishing for: involvement of people, communities, local leaders, various groupings and so on, to help the people who are really poor and to help them, not by handouts, but to help them to help themselves and to help them in the process of helping themselves to stimulate community development, to assist national policies and objectives and to generate development of the country.

In the Kenyan Programme there is a project to empower women and disadvantaged communities, to deal with street children, to deal with self-help employment creation, to deal with food security through ecological biodiversity. All of these things, sometimes in different words, sometimes in the same words, the Minister has been using in his Budget Speech. This is a comprehensive, interlocking Programme which goes to the root of the problem. We cannot merely wish for poverty alleviation. We have to work to put the Programme and policies in place to ensure that this becomes possible.

Intimately, Mr. Speaker, poverty alleviation cannot be divorced from steadily increasing production and productivity. It cannot be divorced from an increase in wealth which comes from investment. Certainly one of the things by which you can measure the success of poverty alleviation is the creation of employment opportunities. I don't say 'jobs', I don't say 'paid jobs', but opportunities for people to make a livelihood for themselves, and the whole Programme has to focus upon that heavily. If such policies are put in place, Mr. Speaker, to secure these desirable objectives, I say again that the Government will not find the People's National Congress wanting in the national effort to promote them.

We support the threefold objectives set forth in the Budget Speech.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** We would like to see them achieved but we are sceptical of the Government's strategies. Mr. Speaker, if at times our criticisms seem harsh, they were nevertheless intended to be constructive. We would urge the Government to pause, to reflect, to abandon this perceived attitude of fear and suspicion and involve, through the process of real consultation, as far as possible, all the Political Parties, all the social partners in identification of national objectives and a formulation of national policies. If the Government could bring itself to be open, if the Government could bring itself to act in such a way that it is manifestly seen to be fair and just and to be acting in good faith, then I think the stage would have been well and truly set for this county to move forward towards the achievement of these grand desirable objectives in the 1995 Budget.

[Applause]

**Request for Leave to Move the Adjournment of  
the Assembly On Definite Matters of Urgent  
Public Importance - Release of Funds by  
Government to University Of Guyana:  
4<sup>th</sup> August, 1995**

[**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received a request from the Hon. Member, Mr. Hoyte, to move the adjournment of the Assembly under Standing Order 11. I have considered the request and the question as to what amount is due from the Government of its contribution to the University of Guyana. It has been a continuing one for some time now and is, therefore, in my view not of recent occurrence. I am not, therefore, satisfied that it can now be raised as a matter under Standing Order 11.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, let me bow to your honourable ruling. I ask for leave to leave this Honourable Chamber as of now.

[**The Speaker:** Hon. Member, you do not have to have my leave.]

[**Members of the PNC withdrew from the Chamber**]

## **Requests for Leave to Move the Adjournment of the Assembly On Definite Matters of Urgent Public Importance - Wages and Salaries in the Public Service: 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1995**

[**The Speaker:** Hon. Member, Mr. Bynoe.]

[**Mr. Phillip Bynoe:** Mr. Speaker -]

[**The Speaker:** Hon. Member, I have read your request for Adjournment of the Assembly. Unfortunately, I cannot permit it because I think that you have raised certain conduct involving a Minister. Under the Standing Order it should be brought under a Substantive Motion. I therefore cannot entertain your application under Standing Order 11.

Hon. Member, Dr. McKenzie, I have also looked at your application for Adjournment under Standing Order 11. Unfortunately, I do not think it is qualified to be debated under that Standing Order. As you are quite aware, the complaint raised in your Paper has been an on-going one about the amount of money Government is giving to the City Council. It is not a matter of Urgent Public Importance in my view and I therefore would reject your application.

Hon. Member, Mr. Hoyte. I have read your application and although I have some doubt as to whether it is qualified under Standing Order 11, in view of the fact that you said that there is some undertaking given by the Government since 1993 or 1994. I have decided to exercise my discretion in permitting you to raise the matter under Standing Order 111. ]

[**Applause**]

[**The Speaker:** Hon. Member, as you are aware, under the Standing Order it should stand down until 4.30 p.m. but I think maybe the House could agree to dispose of the other business before it refers to this Motion.

Hon. Members, may I also mention that the Speaker would have been placed in a very peculiar position, had I agreed that the other two Motions were qualified, to decide which one of the three Motions should be debated because under Standing Order 11 only one such Motion could be debated in the House. Having regard to my ruling, I was not called upon to make that difficult decision because nothing is set out as to how the Speaker should decide which one of the three should be debated.]

# Motion on the Adjournment of the Assembly on Definite Matter of Urgent Public Importance - Wages and Salaries in the Public Service: 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1995

[The Speaker: The Honourable Member; Mr. Hoyte.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, there is little doubt that the Public Service is in a state of disarray. Morale is very low and performance is even lower. There is a constant flight from the Service and the Government itself has from time to time conceded its inability to attract Public Officers of the quality required for the Developmental Programme of this country.

Once of the main reasons for this low morale, for the exodus from the Service and for the failure to recruit people, is the low wages and salaries being paid. I think anybody who is close to what is happening in the Public Service, would say that, because of inadequate salaries, some disturbing trends are emerging. One is that many Public Officers are moon-lighting. They are doing jobs other than the jobs that they should be doing full-time. Some are resorting to various forms of irregularities to supplement their income. These are matters of fact. I don't think I need to illustrate them at any great length.

In these circumstances, we find that the Government continues to pay people a minimum wage which is below the Government's declared poverty line. This obviously is a very disturbing fact. Public servants have been agitating for better conditions of service and, particularly, increased wages.

In 1993, after some industrial action, the Government side and the representatives of the four union representing public employees met and signed an Agreement. That Agreement was dated 14<sup>th</sup> September, 1995. The major agreement coming out of those discussions was that there was a need for a comprehensive wages policy – I am reading from paragraph 1 (ii) of the document.

*“Both sides agreed that there was need for a comprehensive wages policy to solve problems of the employed poor in the Public Service.”*

The Agreement to have a comprehensive wages policy was reinforced in 1994, because after the 1993 Agreement nothing has happened and the public servants remained without having the question of the rates of increase of their income resolved. And so, in 1994, in May, there was a strike and that strike was resolved as a result of another Agreement signed on the 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1994.

That Agreement, Mr. Speaker, reiterated, the Agreement for establishing a wage policy. That is in paragraph 6 of the Agreement. But, the Agreement also made certain provision for enhancing the salaries and wages of Public Officers. For example, in paragraph 3, it was agreed that there would be a pre-audit of the Budget by the Auditor General with a view to ascertaining whether there were funds available for further sustainable increases in wages. Now, that pre-audit was never done.

Again, in paragraph 3(b) of the Agreement, the Government undertook to make efforts to access additional funds due for disbursement under the Public Administration Project from the ODA and the World Bank, to further supplement the wages and salaries of the workers and to pay the sums due to workers from the 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1993, to 30<sup>th</sup> December, 1993. This also, to this date, has not been done and those arrears were never paid.

In addition, it was agreed that certain persons, described as holding red-circled positions, would be placed on special scales. This was not done. It was agreed that non-specialist positions would be dealt with as part of the comprehensive wages policy. But the wages policy was never put in place and, therefore, the situation of these non-specialist persons could not be addressed.

Finally, the Government committed itself to ensuring that nobody would lose take-home pay as a result of introduction of the Public Administration Project. The fact of the matter is that several Public Officers lost take-home pay in critical Ministries and agencies of the Government, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Accountant General's Department, the Auditor General's Department and the Inland Revenue Department.

Many of these highly trained specialist officers found that their scales were compressed; their maximum salaries reduced and they are not in a position to get any increase in salaries. As a result, there was almost a mass flight from these Ministries and agencies. One agency that suffered terribly was the Auditor General's Department. I don't think that the Hon. Minister of Finance would deny that.

Mr. Speaker, in those circumstances, the public servants seem to believe that the Government is acting in bad faith. Recently, they wrote demanding further salary increases. They met the Minister of Finance who in effect said that the Government could not pay any increases for 1995. In other words, the Agreement to pay increases, based on growth, has been dishonoured, notwithstanding the two Agreements that I have referred to. What the Minister is saying is that there were unbudgeted expenditures which have made it impossible for the Government to meet the liabilities to which it had committed itself.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that a very difficult situation is arising now. I think the public servants and their unions have been acting very responsibly; but it does appear to me, from everything that I have seen and heard, that their members are getting very agitated. I think that we have sufficient problems in this country for us to face a situation in which the Public Service is resorting to industrial action.

I maintain – whoever wishes to contradict me can so – that we are not getting out of the Public Service the kind of performance which is possible. We are not getting this performance because salaries are too low and people are finding it difficult to make ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, one very interesting thing and, at the same time, alarming to Public Officers, is that the Overseas Development Administration, I understand, has withheld disbursement of the third tranche under the PAP, on the grounds that - the Minister is shaking his head, perhaps he will clarify. The Government has not yet put in place a comprehensive wages policy which would enable the public servants to have some kind of clarity in their expectations of salary increases.

I would like to state that the offer made by the Public Service Union and the other unions to the Government for a wages settlement is a reasonable one.

I think that the Government should not push this matter to a confrontation. The unions have written to the Minister of Finance; they have written to the President and they have written to the Minister of Labour. I do believe that this situation calls for very clear thinking and, as the union said in one of its letters, courageous action.

I do not think that it is sufficient to say that there have been unbudgeted expenditures. I do not think that it is sufficient to say that there are IMF strictures. Those of us who have dealt with IMF know that the IMF suggests certain ceilings, but the IMF does not tell you: "*Don't pay more wages.*" You can pay more wages (than the suggested ceiling) if you are going to sacrifice in other areas. It is a question for the Government and I would urge the Government and the Minister to consider this matter very carefully, because I verily believe that, if we go into 1996 with the question of public servants' wages and salaries unresolved, we are going to enter a very critical period for industrial relations and peace in our country. I thank you.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte (Replying):** Mr. Speaker, those of us who follow the discipline of the law know that there is a maxim which says "*Equity looks upon that as done which ought to have been done.*" What ought to have been done by the Hon. Minister Mr. Fung-On and the Hon. Minister, Mr. Jagdeo, was to have replied to my submissions. It hasn't been done so we have to invoke the equitable rule.

The Hon. Minister, Mr. Fung-On – I'll dismiss him in a few words – was utterly confused and seems to feel that if an Agreement has a Schedule, the Schedule is not part of the Agreement. Furthermore, he declined to read paragraph 6 of the Schedule. He put his own gloss upon it about discussions. What paragraph 6 talks about is a mutually agreed wage policy to make provision for increased living standards, *etcetera*. That is

what it said. He went all around the mulberry bush instead of reading the precise words of the Agreement.

The point of this debate is whether or not the Government has acted in bad faith in dealing with the public servants. The answer is 'Yes'. They signed an Agreement. For example, Mr. Speaker, is the Hon. Minister saying that the Wages Agreement, which is promised in 1994 and which he said would be discussed within a matter of weeks, has been put in place at the end of 1995? Is the Hon. Minister saying that his Agreement to put specialists on special scales has been honoured? Is the Hon. Minister saying that his Agreement to put the non-specialist persons within the framework of a National Wages policy has been honoured?

**[Hon. Members: No.]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** The Hon. Member says: Why should we honour it? You therefore have your answer about the bad faith, the lack of credibility on the part of his administration.

I was rather surprised and amazed at the intervention of the Hon. Minister of Finance. It would have been better if he had remained strictly silent.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Because he is no fool, says the Hon. Member. I have my own reservations.

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister has not addressed the point I made. He goes back into history. Let us assume, for example, that all those things he said are true.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** The PNC didn't pay. The PNC wage bill was lower. What has that got to do with an Agreement made with the Public Service to do certain things which they have not done?

**[Interruption]**

**[The Speaker:** Hon. Members, could you please be quiet and let the Hon. Member continue his speech.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I will tell you why I was amazed and surprised at the Hon. Minister. I remember some years ago talking to a young economist. I said

to him: “*Well, what is a Budget?*” and he said, “*A Budget is a statement of expenditure*”. The Hon. Minister reminds me very much of that young economist to whom I spoke many years ago. He tells us about increases in salaries, percentage increases – gives us absolutes in terms of numbers but, on the other hand, he says nothing, he is silent, about the increases in the cost of living.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** What happens today? Suppose if you gave a man \$10 a month ten years ago and it cost him \$10 a month to live, if you give him \$100 today and it costs him \$120 to live, he is worse off than when he was getting \$10 ten years ago. The Hon. Minister makes the terrible *faux pas* of equating numbers ten years ago, five years ago, with numbers today. They are not commensurable and I am sure that he Hon. Minister understand the concept of incommensurability.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very simple matter. First, the public servants are very upset. In their letter to His Excellency the President of the 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1995, this is what they wrote:

*“We think that we need not remind you of your promise to Public Sector workers in you 1992 Elections Campaign.”*

You answer that. Let us know if you didn’t promise them 300 percent increases and today you are not delivering. They are not asking you to deliver 300 percent but to deliver what you had promised them, what you agreed to in terms of the agreements of 1993 and 1994. No amount of sophistry is going to get you out of this matter here, no amount of blaming the PNC is going to get you of being unfaithful to a commitment you made.

[An Hon. Member: Honour the Agreement.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, this Government is going to find itself in serious problems. The Public Service needs to have its problems addressed and the most important of those problems today is the problem of wages and salaries.

The Hon. Minister might feel, as he said, that the Public Service understands – the people understand – that the PNC was bad, the PPP is good and therefore when they look back upon the bad PNC they will do nothing but embrace the good PPP, and everybody will live happily ever after. That is not going to happen.

[Hon. Gail Teixeira: That is what you are afraid of.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** No, no, no, my dear, even with your looks I am not afraid of you.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** So, Mr. Speaker, I would reiterate with I said, I raise this matter not out of ill-will or malice. I raise it because it is an important and major national issue. If the Minister wants, he can sweep it under the proverbial carpet. He can say, that the problem doesn't exist. He can say like the Hon. Minister, Mr. Fung-On, that there is no Agreement; but the public servants know that there is an Agreement.

The public servants look forward to increases in their 1996 wage packet, whether you call them substantial or not. If they don't get them I tell you in all seriousness, that we are going to have major difficulties on the industrial front in our country.

[Applause]

[**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, this concludes the debate on the Motion for the Adjournment and also the Business for today.]

## Motion on the Approval of Estimates of Expenditure Budget Debate: 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1996

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, when I heard the Hon. Minister speak about 'Unleashing Guyana's Potential' there was a little stirring in my brain. There was something familiar about his phrase, and then I remembered that some time in 1979, I gave a talk at one of our Party Congresses on development and I said this:

*"Low production is the direct cause of our poverty. We have to change the situation by increasing significantly and continuing to increase the national output of goods and services, but to do this with any measure of success we have first of all to liberate and develop the productive forces and for this we must begin by knowing what potential is in our hands."*

Obviously, there is a little coincidence and I wonder whether it is just a happy coincidence; but it does not matter because, Mr. Speaker, I believe the free exchange of ideas is a market place of knowledge and information.

There has been much discussion and debate about numbers, fiscal deficits, balance of payments, revenues, and that kind of thing. But really, in the final analysis, in the larger compass of national life, the Budget has to do with the quality of life and the well-being of people.

It has to do with development and development is not only a physical thing, it has emotional, cultural and social dimensions. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, when you come to judge a Budget you have to judge it against the background of these considerations: How does it contribute to development in terms of the definition which I have given?

Mr. Speaker, the Budget is nothing in itself, a concatenation of numbers. The Budget Speech supports it with a string of words. The real point is this: Does the Budget pass the test of credibility? Do the numbers make sense? How coherent is it, and how efficacious it will be in promoting people's well-being? I suggest that on a careful examination of the Budget it fails abjectly to pass that test.

I have searched the documents to find the objectives of the Budget and it seems to me that there is a twofold objective which has been stated in different ways but which comes down to this: First, development 'with a human face' - they use that jargon - through the providing of incentives with the purpose of increasing people's well-being.

Secondly, providing opportunities for people to achieve this objective. It's a good point that the Hon. Minister has made about opportunities because, in the final analysis, unless there are opportunities for every single person in this country to contribute, to grow and to prosper, we can forget any objective of national development.

Edward de Bono, well known for his work in lateral thinking, said that an opportunity is as real an ingredient in business as raw materials, labour and finance, but it only exists when you see it. Really, the ultimate question in our society is going to be whether people have the opportunity to make the best of their lives and to contribute maximally to the development of their country.

I have said that the Budget fails the test because it lacks credibility. I made the same point last year that the credibility gap occurs because of the absences of candour. The Budget tells us little, suppresses much. The numbers, such as they are, do not match the grandiose rhetoric of the Hon. Minister, indeed, I am minded to adapt the mantra of Johnny Cochrane of the O. J. Simpson Trial and say that the numbers don't match, and if the numbers do not catch there has to be a catch. And the catch is this: that the Minister was forced to drag these numbers willy nilly on to the Procrustean bed of IMF requirements and conditionalities.

In other words, he starts with the answer to the sum and then he works backwards, and the answer to the sum, Mr. Speaker, was a 15 percent of GDP deficit for 1996.

I have the IMF document because I keep in close contact with international agencies and with my friends abroad. I keep informed. This document, Mr. Speaker, tells us that the target which IMF has set for the overall deficit is 15 percent.

The Hon. Minister on page 31 of the Budget statement, in the Table which he has set out there, has targeted 14.3 percent and having done that, he has to cobble together a set of figures which, when you add and subtract, will yield a result of an overall fiscal deficit of 15 percent or thereabout. This is done by manipulating the numbers. That is so.

For a Ministry to suffer a reduction of \$1.6 billion it calls for very careful and unambiguous explanation. But more than that, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the Elections you will find numbers which are really incomprehensible in the light of the fact that this Commission will be responsible to undertake heavy and extensive work this year, almost with immediate effect, to put in place the arrangements for registering voters for the next election.

How do you explain, Mr. Speaker, that in an election year or the year prior to an election, when the Commission is expected to function at full speed there is an allocation of \$295,000 for materials, equipment and supplies, \$620,000 for fuel and lubricants; \$600,000 for electricity; \$482,000 for transport, travelling and postage and \$8 million which is supposed to take care of the registration exercise, training of trainers and supervisors from ten districts, advertisements, etc.

The Hon. Minister has adverted my attention to the National Registration Centre and indeed I have marked that, because really the scam is this: that under certain critical Heads the Government puts a large amount of money or an amount of money that appears to be adequate, but under the other Heads it puts reduced resources that cannot carry the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, if you were to put \$100 million for National Registration and you say that is to train people, to advertise, to buy equipment and all of that, but you do not put money for travelling, to buy fuel, to buy print materials and so on, then what are you doing, and what is it you are saying? And you find this phenomenon throughout the various Heads?

For example, Mr. Speaker, the allocation to the Ministry of Health, Head 34, has declined dramatically from \$666 million in 1995, to \$468 million in 1996. Imagine that the Ministry of Education and Cultural Development, Head 37, gets roughly the same amount of money in 1996 as it got in 1995.

It is not credible. Is not there something called inflation and price rising across the whole spectrum of national life? How does one explain that?

When we look at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Police, we see that the Police are getting no increase over 1995. The Hon. Member says it is not true. I do not know whether he has a different document from the one given to me, but Head 22, Ministry of Home Affairs, Police – In fact I misquoted.

It is not that they are getting the same amount as in 1995; they are getting less than the revised figure. Take your Estimates and read them. Don't depend on your memory! The best of us find that our memory fails us at times.

I can go through the Estimates, Mr. Speaker, and illustrate the point that I am making. That is why I am satisfied that those numbers were put in willy-nilly so that when you do the arithmetic, you come out with the right answer. But this is not a matter of arithmetic. The whole programme has to gel, it has to cohere, otherwise nothing will move.

It is interesting to note that in this Visit Guyana Year, which is being trumpeted all over the place, the Ministry of Trade and Tourism which has responsibility for this massive exercise which, we are told, is going to bring 250,000 people to Guyana, is given the meagre sum of \$110 million. I would really wish to commiserate with the Minister, the Hon. Shree Chan. How is he going to do it in the absence of resources?

Mr. Speaker, an interesting thing to note about these numbers in relation to reality in the Ministries is seen when one looks at a little note tucked away at the end of the Estimates for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It says that, as 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1995, there was a 48 percent vacancy ratio. One wonders what is the vacancy ratio throughout the Ministries. One wants to know again whether the numbers put in reflect the total establishment or whether they reflect the actual numbers of people in the Ministry. That is a great secret. You cannot fathom that information from an examination of the Ministry's Estimates.

Mr. Speaker, let me illustrate what I am talking about. The Minister does not seem to understand that his numbers do not gel. Let us go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at page 128 -

**[Interruption: No, No.]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** If I am going to ride a horse, it's going to be a thoroughbred.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** If you were to take Subhead 102, Senior Technical Staff, and you do the calculation, you will find that on those numbers the average salary to one of those persons is \$70,000 and no person in that category gets that kind of money, not even the Director General of the Ministry. That is a minor point.

Let me proceed and not be distracted and turned away from the point I want to make. The Hon. Minister says in his Budget Speech that the Budget is focused on development challenges, yet it is silent upon those very areas which pose a challenge to development.

Nowhere is there a rigorous examination, as the Hon. Member Dr. King said, of the performance of the vital economic sectors in 1995, and nowhere is there any clear projection of what is expected of these sectors in 1996.

Mr. Speaker, the man-in-the-street is not interested in balance of payments, and debt service ratio and all that kind of esoteric jargon. He wants to know how this Budget is going to affect him in terms of his salary and wages; what it is going to do for him in terms of job openings; how it is going to affect the availability of food to him and his family; how it is going to affect the health services, education and housing. Those are the practical things he is interested in. That is what he wants to know about and those are the vital, sensitive and critical areas that one would have expected the Hon. Minister to dwell on in this Budget Speech, for 'development with a human face'. We have not seen it. There is nothing about those things.

In fact, in 1993, in housing, we were told that the Government was going to regularise 6,000 squatting areas in this country and when from this side we said the Hon. Minister of Finance: "*Look, some of those '0s' are wrong.*" He said "*No.*" We do not have 6,000 squatting areas; we do not have 600 squatting areas; I doubt whether we have 60 but the truth of the matter is that despite all those grandiose statements, not a single squatting area has been regularised.

When we came to 1995 we were told something else: the Government was going to build houses – vague as vague could be; and in 1996, Mr. Speaker, silence. Silence on this critical area of housing; and that is why I say that the Budget lacks credibility. We cannot believe it and it cannot pass the test for development, development being defined in the way I have defined it.

But then we are told, Mr. Speaker, that the Budget is people-oriented and there is no amplification of people-oriented sectors so that people could see this orientation towards them which is claimed for the Budget.

As a matter of fact, all that we have coming from the Government is confusion, utter confusion, and that makes it difficult for anybody

to accept anything that is presented by the Government. We are told, for example, by the Hon. Member of this House, who happens to be Chairman of Linmine, that Linmine made a profit in 1995. The Hon. Prime Minister, who happens to be the Minister responsible for the industry, chose to be dumb. He said nothing at all about this important matter, about a major industry in the economy of this country. Yet, Mr. Speaker, the report of an area study of Region 10 and the Linden community which was co-led, according to the Report, by the Hon. Prime Minister and the Hon. Senior Minister of Finance, says that for 1995 the company is expected to show an operating loss of \$69.4 million.

At least the Hon. Prime Minister had a report of a committee which he headed along with the Hon. Minister of Finance. According to the Report he must have. (You do not know this? It is your Report, your committee. It is a Report prepared by the macro-economic division planning unit of the Ministry of Finance and the Report says that this team was led jointly by you and the Hon. Minister. You do not remember this, Hon. Prime Minister? I am going to lend you just now.)

Mr. Speaker, credibility. The Hon. Minister Mr. Fung-On told us that there is no such thing as an agreement between the **four** unions representing the Public Sector and the Government; and yet in 1995 –

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** There is still time for you to represent. The Hon. Senior Minister of Finance said this:

*“Our Government has agreed with the Public Service Union, that a committee including the Ministry of Finance, PSM and PSU would be set up urgently to agree on a wages policy.”*

I have it; I read it the last time. You are the person who said it. You said that it did not exist. This is a clear acknowledgement; and the then Minister went on to say *“I expect the first meeting of the committee before the end of this month”*. That was February 1995 – no such committee, no such agreement up to now.

Mr. Speaker, we were told by the former Senior Minister of Finance that he was going to set up a stock exchange. He was enthusiastic about it, he was ‘gung-ho’ about it. That was in 1995. In 1996 along comes the new Minister and he says: *“No stock exchange. The conditions are not favourable or ripe, or convenient for the establishment of a stock exchange.”*

I do not care what they do. All I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that there is utter confusion in their ranks. The British Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, as I learnt when I used to study that period of history – used to go to his Cabinet meetings and would promptly fall asleep but before falling asleep he would say, *“Gentlemen, when you have arrived at a decision, wake me up.”*

*It does not matter what we say, provided we all say the same thing.*" I would recommend that approach to the People's Progressive Party because their voices are discordant saying different things to different people and causing a lot of confusion. This is leading to a very severe credibility problem because, Mr. Speaker, only two days ago the Hon. Minister of Education came into this House and was so keen on showing that a certain survey was done under the watch of the People's National Congress administration that he seriously misrepresented the facts, wittingly or unwittingly, I do not know.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, it could not have been unwittingly, judging from the other things he said. He said that the literacy survey done by Professor Jennings and others was done in 1992 but, in fact, the data were collected between February and June 1995 and the study completed in November, 1995. He will have to have a special dispensation because he is a man of the Lord.

Mr. Speaker, so be it. These things do not redound to the credit of the Government because what is the public to make of all of this confusion? It is this same confusion which pervades the Budget and its numbers, except that the confusion in the numbers has been brought about by a compulsion to achieve certain end result for the IMF.

We know that the IMF will be coming next month, and when the IMF team comes, the Minister will then prepare the real Budget, so that is why I am saying we should not pay too much attention to these numbers here. These numbers have been cobbled together to meet a statutory constitutional deadline and to get the Budget behind the backs of the Government.

Let me turn to the Poverty Alleviation Programme which, indeed, is a cruel hoax played on the people of this country. I said last year that what was proposed was not a Programme; it was not coherent. I went to the trouble to draw attention to a Poverty Programme that had been presented to the European Union by the Government of Kenya. There were several projects which interlocked and they all had, as their objective, not palliatives, not giving handouts to people but the objective of putting the poor in a position permanently to increase their incomes and earnings.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member has thought it fit to make an issue of the Poverty Programme. What is she talking about? A supplement to pregnant and lactating women will be provided. That is a palliative, that is a band-aid. I am not saying it is not useful, that it will not help poor people. It is not a Poverty Alleviation Programme to improve sanitary conditions in schools, to provide vitamins and iron tablets.

This is not a Poverty Alleviation Programme. It is not a Programme. It is a series of pretty projects which will help some people but which will not tackle the underlying problem of poverty.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** That can only take place in a context of increasing production of wealth. What you are doing here is giving handouts. There are some people who perhaps need this kind of thing. The criticism I made last year remains completely valid.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the vexed but important question of wages and salaries, inflation and the tax burden.

My Hon. Friend, the Hon. Minister Mr. Fung-On, had his say on this matter. There is always a certain difficulty in putting together meaning from his presentations. The essential fact that we have to understand is that the IMF has put a wage freeze on this country. That is the essential fact. I'll read it to you in a moment, it does not matter when. It has nothing to do with whether it is PNC, WPA or what. That is the essential fact, and that is the fact that Government is afraid to tell the people.

In the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility Policy Framework Paper, 1994 – 1996, the IMF says that Public Service salary and wage increases should be kept within the rate of inflation. Mr. Speaker, we have this dilemma: What is the rate of inflation? The IMF and Government have both agreed that the consumer price index is inadequate.

In the attachment to the paper this is what is written: "*Publication of a new consumer price index.*" And then it goes on. Listen, Mr. Minister, I do not know whether you have read your own document. "*Steps to be taken to re-benchmark the current price estimates and rebase ... the constant price estimates on 1992.*" A clear admission that the estimates we are using for the data are inadequate, to say the least, and need to be revised.

If we start from there, we will see that what passes for the rate of inflation is wildly out of kilter. That is not out-dated, it is 1996.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Well, why don't you lay it in the House? You are a transparent Government. You are a transparent Minister. You are not laying any document in the House despite your large claims to be transparent. But let me go on. That rate of inflation is completely laughable and I understand on the soundest of authorities that that 8 percent rate of inflation was not given to the Ministry of Finance by the Statistical Bureau.

The Statistical Bureau prepared some data in Georgetown.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Well, get up and say it publicly to the contrary so that your officers will know what to think of you. It was at the Ministry of Finance that the inflation rate – bogus as far as we are concerned – was calculated and put in this pie.

So you have a problem, Mr. Speaker, with wages. The Hon. Minister, Fung-On, was telling us a lot of off-the-cuff, airy fairy numbers. I want to draw attention to a document which was prepared professionally for the Public Service Union about the movement of wages in this country within recent times. Let me quote:

*“Interestingly, however, while no one can dispute that real wages have increased since the PPP/C assumed office, it must not be overlooked that prior to 1992 real wages were also increasing. As a matter of fact, between 1990 and 1992 real wages increased by 57 percent while between 1992 and 1995 the increase was 53 percent. More significant, however, is that while the increase between 1990 and 1992 was 57 percent for 1993 to 1995 it was a mere 20 percent. The lower percentage increase for 1993 to 1995 was obviously a decision of the PPP/C Government to limit increases to 1995 to the rate of inflation and no provision for real wage increases”.*

The document then went on to provide a very interesting statistic showing personal emoluments as a percentage of GDP, between 1964 and 1969 it was 10.4 percent, 1970 and 1974 – 12.5, 1975 and 1979 – 13.6, 1980 and 1980 – 15.4, 1989 – 17.3 and 1990 and 1994 it plummeted to 7.5 percent.

[**The Speaker:** Hon. Member, could you identify the source for the record, please.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** This is a document prepared for the four unions representing workers in the Public Service and distributed by them.

Mr. Speaker, let me now tell them some home truths about the debt burden. The Minister carries the line that this debt burden is a terrible thing that is causing the Government not to be able to pay increased wages. Mr. Speaker, let me make this point: so long as you pay only the rate of inflation, particularly when that rate is suspected, you are condemning the Public Officer to a situation where his real income could never increase.

In 1994, the Government, in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank, retained Professor Mike Faber and Professor Chrisnodat Persaud, a Guyanese, holding a Chair at the University of the West Indies, to do a major study on the Guyana economy. Professor Faber did a special Paper on Debt which was never laid in this Honourable House -

[**Interruption**]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I like that answer. You don't have to lay it, because it is “our document”. Keep all your documents.

The IDB in conjunction with you sent out a press release some time ago saying that they are now open and anybody can go to their office and see documents which they have prepared for various Governments. If the

Government wanted to inform this Honourable House and wanted the People of Guyana to know what is happening, they would lay all documents in this Honourable House. You can't get any documents -

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** That is irrelevant, young lady. Stay as sweet as you are.

What does this study show? It shows – and I am going to read Professor Faber's comments because they are not flattering to the Government people at all. It shows that the members of the Government are indulging in smoke and mirrors, a magic show, sleight of hand. At one time they talk about the debt burden as a percentage of revenue and at another time they talk of it as so many times national income.

They are always shifting about, never dealing with the real issue and trying to get people to understand what it's all about.

Mr. Speaker, Professor Faber pointed out a number of things. First of all, that the IMF insists, as a bookkeeping procedure, that the Government should put in the Estimates Debt Burden Obligation, but Debt Burden Obligation is a different thing from actual payment. You get the Debt Burden Obligation and they run with that.

I quote from a document, as I said, IDB 1994, and I understand from the Hon. Minister that he has seen a copy. In his memorandum addressed to the Managing Director of the IMF, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1994, Dr. Jagan described the debt burden as ... *"consuming nearly 80 percent of our State revenues and 60 percent of foreign earnings"* and adds *"those large payments deny us the possibility of having economic growth and human development"*

In his Budget Speech of 8<sup>th</sup> March, 1994, the Senior Minister of Finance stressed much the same point. The Government's scheduled external debt payments are greater than half of its current revenues, leaving insufficient resources for accomplishment of the Government's far-reaching development agenda.

Professor Faber then continues: *"Yet the same Budget Speech records that the economy will achieve growth in excess of 6 percent for the fourth consecutive year, that the inflation rate had declined from 70 percent in 1991 to 14 percent in 1992, to 7.7 percent in 1993, that the gross international reserves of the Bank of Guyana grew from US\$191.1 million at the end of 1992 to US\$246.3 million at the end of 1993."* *"Surely"*, says Professor Faber, *"there's a puzzle here. If the external debt situation is really so difficult, how was it possible for the macro-economy to perform so well, and for the foreign exchange reserves to grow in the bargain."* And he answers himself. He says: *"Yes, there is a puzzle here, there is also plenty of confusion"* –

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** *"– both, as to what the figures are and how legitimate it is to relate them to one another."*

What is happening with the Government is a common problem with statistics. When this debate started and everybody started to talk about all kinds of numbers, figures and statistics and so on, I thought I would for my own pleasure go back and read Reichman's classic work *The Use and Abuse of Statistics*. I refreshed my memory about his wise saying about statistics. I quote from *The Use and Abuse of Statistics* by W. J. Reichman:

*"There are two widely divergent views of statistics currently popular among the general public. One view is that published statistics are themselves invested with some quality of meaning, not unlike the quality ascribed to numbers by ... and that they enjoy such degree of infallibility that they may be accepted without question. This of course, is just as nonsensical as the other and yet more popular belief that statistics can be made to prove anything and therefore, by implication, in fact, they can prove nothing. This is quite untrue. Nevertheless, it is nearer the view to say that statistics may be presented in such a way as to appear to prove anything."*

This is, of course, and entirely different matter. Let me make a great point which is this:

*"Statistics are not merely a science. The interpretation of statistics conforms also to the nature of an art, even though much of it can be accomplished by strictly scientological methods, it is, of course, in the misinterpretation of statistics that the real value of the subject lies."*

So it is the interpretation. Mr. Minister, I would urge upon you, in your spare time, if you have any, to read Reichman.

Mr. Speaker, what has happened here is classic confusion with numbers, as Professor Faber points out, confusion which leads to comparisons that are not legitimate. To come really to the point. Faber demonstrates that after you account for the fact that there is a difference between debt service obligations and actual debt payments and you start dealing with actual debt payments, and you deal with write-offs and with rescheduling the actual debt service in 1993, the debt service as a percentage of revenue was really about 25 percent.

Then he went on further to say that, *"really, it is not quite legitimate to use revenue as a basis for calculating your debt service ratio."* Mr. Speaker, in my time when I used to dabble with these things, the matter was simpler and the debt service ratio was deemed to be a percentage of your payments as a percentage of your export earnings. That was the classical debt service ratio.

I know that people do different things now, but the IMF, using the classical formula, came to the same conclusion as Professor Faber. What was Professor Faber saying? That the debt service ratio was about 25 percent even if you use revenues. He did go on to say however, that that was not legitimate and he showed how actual balance of payments

support, in fact, helped to pay debt and, as a result the debt burden servicing becomes not as onerous as the Government would like people to believe.

Let me read, Mr. Speaker, what the IMF has to say about this matter because it is very important. I think it is about time that people are no longer fooled, and, if I use a good Guyanese term, 'cumfulled' with this matter of debt burden, because it is not all that esoteric, not all that difficult, once it is presented to them in a clear and understandable way.

In paragraph 83 of the IMF's document to which I have been referring, it is said that, debt relief in various forms, resulted in a reduction of actual debt service payments to 24 percent of exports in 1993.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** I am told that I should repeat it so that it could sink in.

Not only Professor Fabar but the IMF document with which the Government concurred said that. They are asking about 1993 and the same thing will hold for subsequent years: that the actual debt service payment was 24 percent of exports in 1993.

Mr. Speaker, what do they do when they speak about 80 percent and all these outlandish figures? They add together external debt, internal debt and have mishmash and do all sorts of things with the number.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** You read Professor Faber and understand the refinement of the matter. Mr. Speaker, all this bleating is a sham. In opposition, the Members of the Government used to say to us: "*Don't pay debt. Don't pay.*" Now that they are in Government, what is their solution? March, march, march against debt and we will all march to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion.

Mr. Speaker, we are not running a comedy show in this country. We are supposed to be running the administration. Seriously, this is a country which is trying to make progress and provide a better life for its people. So let us have done with all these grand-standing tactics and deal properly and intelligently with the issues affecting the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with two sensitive issues of infrastructure. One has to do with electricity. The Hon. Prime Minister tells us that all is well. The Minister of Finance tells us that there has been an improvement. Well, I do not know where the improvement is. I can speak for myself: scarcely a day passes when my home is not in blackout. I can speak for my office: scarcely a day passes when we don't have an outage at Congress Place.

Mr. Speaker, what is the reality with electricity? The Government postures a great game. The Hon. Prime Minister tells us: "*We are not going to privatise for the sake of privatising*". But what is the reality? The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that the Government has committed itself to privatising the GEC. Let me read from the relevant paragraph in the same IMF document your Government concurred with.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Well, your President said "*I'm in power*".

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** He said so. Have you never heard his Press Conference? This document deals with 1994 – 96. It has nothing to do with my time there. The section says that the power sector is in a shambles; that existing generation transmission and distribution are all worn out. We all know that. That is not news.

The Government agreed that by June, 1994 – which is long past – it will agree with IDB on Terms of Reference for a power sector strategy study to be completed by April, 1995, which will include privatisation options for GEC, regulatory framework for the sector, and a medium to long-term expansion plan and analysis of options.

A little later on, the Government said that in addition to the 11 megawatt plant it had established, it was negotiating a joint venture with a foreign utility and was looking for a 'Boot', that is 'build, own, operate and transfer arrangement' for a 22 percent megawatt power facility. It pledged that the new power facilities would be privately owned or managed and the Government would consult with IDB prior to undertaking any commitment in regard to public investment outlays of the sector.

I am not criticizing the Government for its delay. That is not my point. My point is that despite all its talk it has committed itself to privatising and, Mr. Speaker, not only electricity but sugar, rice and bauxite. It might startle some of the Hon. Members on the other side to learn about this.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** How far is '94 from now? We are dealing with the Government that is very devious.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** There has never been so much corruption as there is under your administration.

Read the *New Nation* this week about State Planning, about GUYSUCO.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** The Government agreed that to attract the necessary private equity capital and ensure efficient management in GUYSUCO, it would collaborate with CIDA on either a restructuring or privatisation programme. By 1994, the Government would contract an International Financial Adviser to help develop such programme.

[Interruption]

**Mr. Hoyte:** For LINMINE, similarly, the Government is committed to seeking private ownership, etc. You are not bucking the IMF, my friend. You believe that you are smart. The Government believes that it is full of tricks.

[Interruption]

**Mr. Hoyte:** The Government believes that it can deceive the International Financial Institutions and the International Community.

You know Joe Louis had a famous saying: *"You can run but you can't hide"*, and the time is going to come when all of these devious acts, these acts of bad faith, are going to catch up with you in the International Institutions.

Mr. Speaker, let me make a point about sugar. Sugar is in serious trouble. Government makes a lot of play about the profit made by sugar. In the 1994 Report which was just laid in this House, the Chairman of GuySuCo has pointed out that really that profit was derived from monetary fluctuations. It was an unusual and extraordinary situation and the Chairman warns about the problems facing the industry. Last year it had to get a short-term loan from Citi Bank to enable it to do pre-crop financing.

Mr. Speaker, more serious than that is the fact that sufficient funds were not available to cover the high cost of mill and boiler spare parts, that funds for major rehabilitation are still not in place, and that the 1994 Capital Budget could not be started due to problems in accessing funds from the World Bank. This will place a further strain on the ageing factory machinery. I do not know, Mr. Speaker, that between 1994 – 1996 the factory is suddenly going to become rejuvenated without a capital injection. More than that: a worrying feature has been attrition of senior staff in the industry.

I digressed to talk about sugar because what I am saying to you is this. As Joe Louis said: *"you can run, but you can't hide"* and there is no way that you are going to escape the divestment and privatisation of the Guyana Sugar Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, the Government in the Budget made great play about helping Georgetown and LINMINE. I do not know if the Government

believes that the people of this country are idiotic. We do not have to read too far to see that nothing has been done for the Government cannot arrogate to itself the right to hold money, to decide on the priorities of roads in Georgetown and say it is helping the Council. It is reducing the Council to a talk shop and a rubber stamp and the US\$2.2 million the Minister referred to has to do with the Government's Road Programme rather than with the Road Programme for Georgetown.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** If you shifted it, why did you not give the Council an opportunity to choose its priorities? Are you are going to sit down and tell the Council what roads you are going to build?

Let me go on to Linden. We have in the Budget a special incentive regime for Linden and surrounding communities. My colleague, the Hon. Member Dr. King, has already dealt with the spurious nature of these so-called 'incentives'. This kind of plastering-over of the sore is not going to attract investors and investment to Linden and I am going to tell you why.

In your own document, the Report called '**An Area of Study, Region 10 and the Linden community**' prepared by the Macro Economic Planning Unit, Ministry of Finance, points out that the Government would have to embark upon massive expenditure to upgrade infrastructure in Linden. For example, the power situation is inadequate, there are a steam generating plant, with a rated capacity of 27.5 megawatts and an operational capacity of 20, and a 5 megawatt stand-by diesel plant.

The steam plant needs about US\$1.1 million for immediate rehabilitation. The power situation has been deteriorating badly. Between 1990 and 1995 the total generation declined from 117.2 kilowatt hours to 85.5.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** It is not a demand problem because your export to GEC fell to zero and total consumption declined from 117.2 to 85.5 kilowatt hours. In any event the plant is old and requires major new investment.

Water, too, Mr. Speaker, requires massive investment because all the plants are deteriorating and require rehabilitation. The mains are old and leaking. There is insufficient pressure and all manner of things are wrong with the water supply.

The roads, because of the heavy traffic, are not in good shape and the drainage also. The point I am making is that those things have to be fixed before any investor is going to put his money in that area and that is really what this team has said to you. Let me read the conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that the Report said that the Hon. Prime Minister and the Senior Minister of Finance were the team co-leaders. It

is the Minister's Ministry and his officers who are making this Report to him. What they are saying to him is that there are certain things he will have to do which are going to call for massive investment and until he does those things, he is not going to get any investment in the area and all of this talk in the Budget about special fiscal regime is so much hot air.

The Hon. Minister talked about opportunities. My contention is that that is a key and critical issue in our country.

There is a little doubt as my colleague, the Hon. Member Mr. Ivor Allen, explained, that there is tremendous victimisation and discrimination in this county. We can do two things about it. Last year, I took a more cautious approach and I said that here was a perception of these things. Today, I go further because it has gone beyond perception. There is a conviction, a widely held conviction, that these things are happening.

I don't intend to go into chapter and verse. Not only in jobs, not only in occupation of lands. It goes beyond that, it goes to a point where certain people are being hounded and employers are being warned against employing them. In case the Hon. Prime Minister doesn't know, I would urge him to go around and listen.

Recently – the Hon. Prime Minister can enquire about this – a prominent citizen known throughout the years for his hostility to the People's National Congress – nobody could ever say he is a PNC member – called upon His Excellency the President to express his alarm and concern about what is happening in this country and his assessment of the growing feeling of alienation, suspicion and even hostility and anger. He was particular alarmed about this and felt that he had a duty as a citizen to go and discuss this matter with His Excellency the President. Further I say not at this stage.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that however well-intentioned the Budget might be, however, well-intentioned the Hon. Senior Minister might be, there are things that have to be done, beyond numbers and the confines of this document, and the confines of the Government Ministries, and the confines of officialdom, to give real confidence to all sections of the people of this country that they can feel that, first of all, they have a right to be here, that they are equal citizens in this great Republic of ours, they can know that opportunities abound for them as they abound for each and every other citizen in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, those things can happen, that feeling can permeate the land but nothing will happen, to contend, unless the Government takes the lead. The Government has to take the lead. The Government has to take the lead in convincing the people that this is a land of fairness and equity and equal opportunity for all of us who can proudly call ourselves citizens of this fair land of Guyana.

## In Committee of Supply: 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1996

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Chairman, we are here on the serious business of the country. I asked the Hon. Minister a simple question. He has not answered me. There is a provision under **Subhead 312000 for Subsidies and contributions to Local International Organisations**. The note to that Subhead says that this increase is due to the addition of three local agencies. One of these three agencies is the Presidential Guard. These Estimates, therefore, make provision for the payment of something called Presidential Guard under the Office of the President. I am asking the Hon. Minister whether this Presidential Guard is part of the Police Force and, if so, if it is under its Command, as it ought to be, of the Commissioner of Police. Secondly, if it is not under the Commissioner of Police, is it a statutory body or it is a body that has no legal basis?

The Hon. Minister says it is under the Ministry of Home Affairs and it should be transferred. How is it going to be transferred to the Ministry of Home Affairs when the provision is under the Office of the President? I repeat my question Mr. Chairman, and I hope I will get an answer.

Mr. Chairman, under Subheads 203, 302 and 307 there has been no increase over the revised Estimates for 1995. I want to ask the Hon. Minister whether that is a reasonable thing. The Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs himself spoke about the inflation. We don't have to be economists or to be Ministers of Finance to know that the cost of goods and services is going up. So how is it that the army is given no increase in vital areas of their operations, such as the procurement of materials and supplies, travelling, transport and things like that?

The other point, Mr. Chairman, is this: In the notes at Subhead 314 we were told that there is provision there for the payment of \$25 million a year related to the Haiti mission. Would the Hon. Minister explain that?

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Government recently put out a press statement, alleging over-expenditure by the Army of some \$200 million and later on it was said to be high but yet, Mr. Chairman, the Revised Estimates show a lower expenditure than the budgeted estimates for 1995. Would the Hon. Minister give an explanation for that phenomenon?

Mr. Chairman, I asked the Hon. Minister to explain this amount of \$25 million, arrears related to Haiti Mission, as explained in the note.

### Division 501 – Office of the President

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Chairman, **Project Code 12002, Office and Residence of the President**. As far I know the Office of the President and the Residence of the President are two distinct physical entities, so would the Minister explain the fusing of these two physical entities for the provision of a single allocation.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman: **340004 – Public Administration Project.** This is something that has been going on for years now, and every time it comes up it seems to have undergone some change. Will the Hon. Minister tell us what stage this project has arrived at, and precisely what is expected of it, if and when it is concluded?

Finally, Mr. Chairman, **333001, Hydropower Division.** Will the Hon. Member tell us how far this project has progressed and when do they predict that it is likely to be completed?

Mr. Chairman, I resent the fact that the Hon. Minister has me jumping like a jack-in-the-box. I asked what the project was intended to achieve. I repeat that question, Mr. Chairman.

#### **Head 4 - Office of the Prime Minister**

**[Question proposed that the sum of \$20,664,000 for Head 4, Office of the Prime Minister, stand part of the Estimates.]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Chairman, there is a note to the effect that the establishment under Subheads 101 – 105, had a vacancy ratio of 61 percent at the end of 1995. I wonder if the Hon. Prime Minister would explain to us, first of all, why such a high vacancy ratio? Secondly, what is his Ministry doing to attract appropriate skills to manage his Ministry?

Mr. Chairman, I am very worried about the fact that there has been, in real terms, a reduction in the allocation for the police. Some of the Heads either have the same allocation or roughly the same allocation as last year and some have a lower allocation. Indeed, the overall amount being asked to be voted to the police is less than the revised estimates for 1995 and less than the budgeted allocation for 1995.

Mr. Speaker, crime is a serious social matter in this country. Everybody is calling upon the police to perform better and more efficiently. These allocations are really terrible in this situation. I wonder whether the Hon. Minister will defend these lower allocations to the Police Force.

## Motion of Sympathy on Death of Mr. Mohamed Kasim, C.C.H.: 9<sup>th</sup> February, 1996

*Be it Resolved:*

*That this National Assembly record its deep regret at the death of Mr. Mohamed Kasim, C.C.H., and pay tribute to the dedicated and distinguished service which he rendered to Guyana and to the Parliament in his capacity as a Member of Parliament and as Minister of Works and Hydraulics, Minister of Communications and Minister of State for Agriculture;*

*And be it Further Resolved:*

*That this Assembly direct that an expression of its sympathy be conveyed to his bereaved family and other relatives.*

### **[Question proposed.]**

**[The Speaker:** The Hon. Member, Mr. Hoyte.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Mohamed Kasim died on the 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1995. He was a distinguished son of Guyana and made an important contribution in many fields of national development. Like so many Guyanese who have achieved, he was born in humble circumstances at Plantation Hope and by dint of hard work and diligence he made a success of his life.

He became a businessman, rice miller, rice farmer and a politician. At the end of his life he had not only personal achievement in terms of making a contribution to agriculture but in terms of making a contribution in politics, and in 1964 entered politics for the development of the country. He became interested under the banner of the United Force. He was later to change his Party and join the People's National Congress. Between 1964 and 1978, he was a very active Member of this Honourable House, holding Ministerial Office from 1964 to 1977 when his health began to fail.

Dr. Reid likes to tell a story about Mohamed Kasim when they were campaigning in the 60s. Mr. Kasim was a Member of the UF while Dr. Reid was a Member of the PNC, Mr. Kasim has a very large boat with a large outboard engine and Dr. Reid had a very small boat with a very small engine. They would meet in the Pomeroon River and Kasim's boat, of course, could easily outrun Dr. Reid's but because of his friendly nature he always stopped and took Dr. Reid aboard on his larger and more powerful vessel even though they were going as rivals to canvass the same people. He was a political opponent but political differences at the time did not matter.

I would like to remember him for the extraordinary work he did in those early days of the Ministry of Works and Hydraulics, as it was then

called, when we started to build roads on a very massive scale in this country.

He served this country in the field of agriculture, in the field of politics and in the religious field because he was a devout practising Muslim. He did not miss going to his Mosque on Fridays, if he could help it.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be able to stand in this Honourable House to attest to the qualities of an outstanding citizen, now dead, and I move that this Honourable House extend to his family our condolences and to his wife and children the sympathy of this Honourable House.

## Motion on the Second Reading of the Integrity Commission Bill 1995: 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1996

*A Bill intituled:*

*An Act to provide for the establishment of an Integrity Commission and to make provisions for the purpose of securing the integrity of persons in public life.*

**[The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs]**

**[The Speaker:** The Hon. Member, Mr. Hoyte.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, I do not propose to follow the fulminations of the Hon. Attorney General. I am not in a mood to be harsh with him this afternoon. He has appealed to patriotism, but I will remind him of Dr. Samuel Johnson's famous aphorism on patriotism.

Mr. Speaker, let me say at the outset that the People's National Congress supports this Bill, in principle. But having said that, I must also state that the Bill is unlikely to achieve its stated objective of securing the integrity of persons in public life, and the reason is simple.

The problem is not merely corruption among Governmental and other functionaries. The problem is wider than that. It is a national problem of corruption within the society and the Bill with its limited scope, is not going to address that major problem. The best we can say for it is that it is an attempt to do something. Having said that, we have to accept that there are wider considerations within our society which we have to face up to and deal with.

Corruption, Mr. Speaker, even within the Public Sector Ministries and Public Agencies and so on, is not limited or restricted merely to the Heads of those Agencies, not to the Political Heads or the Civil Service Heads, the Permanent Secretaries and people like that. As a matter of fact, the greatest corruption, the most pervasive corruption, takes place right down at the very bottom of the system, where every day people have to give favours, in cash or in other ways, to get simple tasks done, to get services to which they are entitled as citizens, to get service for which they are paying the proper fee. And so we have to consider that our society has reached a stage where there is this serious and pervasive problem of corruption and the corruption takes place because there are people outside what I may call the Public Sector (in which term I include the politicians and people like that) who are prepared to suborn the Public Officers. How do you deal with them? How do you address their actions and their well-being and wholesomeness of our society by their actions and their wrongdoings? So, it is in that context I made the remark that the Bill is unlikely to be efficacious in dealing with national corruption.

Mr. Speaker, there are one or two things of a general nature I would like to comment on. I will deal with them more fully in the Committee stage, but I would say this: that it does not matter whether you have the harshest penalty, confiscation of property, or fines of a million dollars, you have to catch the person first, and my contention is that with all the devious and complex provisions in this Bill, they are not sufficient to really catch persons who to evade its provisions.

There are some provisions which have troubled me and, perhaps, I should deal with them in a general way at this stage of the debate. One of them has to do with the Commission itself. I do believe that to have a Commission of three persons is not satisfactory, and I would have thought that there ought to have been a Commission of at least five persons, because the Bill itself shows that problems are likely to arise if you have a Commission of three persons. There is provision, for example, for one Commissioner to try a matter and to make a decision provided his colleagues concur. Now, I feel that this is most undesirable. Another undesirable feature is this: that if the Chairman is absent, the President could nominate an *ad hoc* person to perform these functions. I think that we should avoid any kind of *ad hoc* action and we should have five members of the Commission, so that if one person is absent, or even two persons, the Commission can carry on its functions to the satisfaction of citizens. Also, Mr. Speaker, there are some provisions which would allow the President to terminate the appointment of a Commissioner. I think that we should look carefully at those provisions, because one says:

*“If the Commissioner is convicted of an offence.”*

Well, what kind of offence? A careless driving offence? An offence which has to do with not taking out some kind of licence because he has forgotten and so on? Those are matters that need to be looked at and addressed and it is not clear, Mr. Speaker, to whom the Commissioner has to appeal, if the President decides to terminate his appointment for one of the reasons listed in the legislation.

I am also worried particularly about the powers of this Commission to borrow money. I do not see why a Commission of this nature should be invested with that authority, or should want to borrow money. I think that it is the duty of the State to fund the work of the Commission, so that it can carry out its duties without any problems of one kind or another having to do with finances.

There are two other matters which I find a little perplexing. One has to do with the appointment of the spouse of a person of a business, or other repute, in our society as a tribunal member.

Now I just can't understand that, and that is clause 21(1). Unless I am seriously misreading it. Mr. Chairman, it seems to say that:

*“Where in the opinion of the President, further information or documents are required from a member of the Commission in respect of his declaration, the President shall, after consultation with the Minority Leader, appoint a person in public life.”*

That’s understandable; but then the clause goes on to say, *“or his spouse.”*

Now, what makes a spouse eligible to carry out these functions? The fact that a man is a brilliant accountant, does not mean that his wife is. The fact that a man is a successful businessman, does not mean that his wife is.

[**Hon. Gail Teixeira:** Does the fact that a woman is a brilliant accountant make her spouse one?]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I beg your pardon, madam. I am concluding that it’s a man, but it could be a woman, and it is the other way around, I agree with you. I defer to the lady’s strictures.

Mr. Speaker obviously there is something seriously wrong with that provision, and I would ask the Hon. Attorney General to look at it.

I believe also that the provision for a Blind Trust is really something that doesn’t make too much sense in the circumstances of Guyana. In places like the United States of America, where people have investments in stocks, and bonds and so on you can put those assets in a Blind Trust, but, in Guyana, I don’t see how the Blind Trust is going to operate. Perhaps, it could be argued that it is put there out of abundant caution, but I don’t see the usefulness of it at all.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there is one clause which has caused us great perturbation, and it is a clause of retroactivity. This legislation seeks to catch persons who were in Public Office, I think from the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 1991. Fine! Retroactive legislation is permitted in certain circumstances, but here, if the person who was in Public Office in 1991 and is no longer in Public Office, fails to file his returns, he becomes liable to criminal prosecution. And it seems to me, therefore, that that piece of legislation is creating a criminal offence with retroactive effect. There is no way we can support that clause in the legislation. Mr. Speaker, it is not that we are trying to protect anybody, but we do not think that we can properly fulfil our function in this Honourable House if we allow an unconstitutional provision to slip through the parliamentary net. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## Motion on the Approval of Financial Paper No. 1/ 1996: 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1996

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Chairman, Items 1 to 7: I notice that the supplementary provision being sought represents a large percentage of the original provision allocated. It seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that it is rather odd that there should have been this substantial underestimation of the requirements of these Ministries and Agencies. For example, the requirement for item **No. 6, Customs and Excise Department**, is about 60 percent of the allocation made by the National Assembly at the time the Estimates were debated. I would therefore ask the Hon. Ministers to explain why there was this substantial underestimation. How is it that in all of these cases the allocations made were so low in relation to the actual requirements of the Ministries?

Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister's explanation does not apply to all of the Subheads on page 1 and really he does not explain how it is that the amounts expended were not anticipated. That explanation given, Mr. Chairman, could not apply to **Subhead 209, Ministry of Health**, for which \$22 million had been voted and the request now is for \$6.4 million which is nearly 30 percent of the original sum voted.

I did not want to deal with every single item but what I say is that in every case, from **Subhead 1 to Subhead 6** there are substantial increases of 30 percent and so on and there must have been a failure to anticipate correctly the needs of these Ministries. May I ask one particular question here to do with **Subhead 309, Ministry of Health**? May I ask how this radium is disposed of, whether this is done by contractors or whether it is done by the Ministry itself?

Mr. Chairman, with the request for Supplementary Provision under Capital, I have the same problem which I had under Current. Here we have requests for very large additional sums and I cannot understand how the Ministry could have failed to make proper estimates of the provisions required. Let me refer to just one of them. Item 2, **Subhead 27001**, where the voted provision was \$60 million. A previous request for Supplementary Provision was for the sum of \$15 million and now the Ministry comes for an additional \$39 million. It seems to me that the underestimate was so grave that it requires some explanation to this House.

Item 4, Mr. Chairman, **Subhead 45008, Loans to Public Corporations:** May I ask whether the loan agreements for LINMINE and for GEC were laid in this Honourable House. If not, does the Minister propose to lay them and, if so, when? Also, Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether the Minister could give us some idea as to the terms of repayment of these two loans.

## **Presentation of Papers and Reports - Economic Policy Framework Paper for 1998 to 2000: 6<sup>th</sup> August, 1996**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, we are not obeying the rules of this Honourable House. Standing Order 14(2) says that a Minister in presenting a paper may make a short explanatory statement of its contents.

[**Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo:** This is what I am doing.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** So all he is limited to do is to say what this paper is all about but to go into a long excursion, contrasting and comparing this document with what happened in the past under the PNC time ... That is what he is doing.

[**Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo:** Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what I am doing but I am doing it in a context. You cannot present documents to this National Assembly without giving them a context and that's exactly what I am trying to do. I am trying to bring out the contents of the paper before us, the Policy Framework Paper by comparison. It is a method of speaking, explaining a paper by comparison. I am just showing the merits of the Economic Policy Framework by that method. So I would just like to continue shortly to present the merits of this paper.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** This Order is explicit, it is very clear. It says that the Minister may make a short explanatory statement of the contents of the document. In other words he can say to this House, this document is about a, b, c, and d. That is the content of the document but the Minister is launching into a long debate which will be a one-sided debate since the rule also says that no debate is to be entertained on the presentation of a document.

[**The Speaker:** The Hon. Member said that he will make a short comment. So let us hope that he is short.]

[**Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo:** Exactly.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** He either obeys the rules or not. If we are not obeying the rules then say so.

# Motion on the Approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for 1997

## Budget Debate: 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1997

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that we have this comic interlude to relieve the tension of the debate in this House, but I learnt something from the Hon. Member who spoke last and that is that we have our version of ebonies in Guyana that I didn't know about.

Mr. Speaker, the traditional PPP exercise in illusions and delusions has been foisted upon us once again with all the props of smoke and mirrors, and this Budget like the Budgets in the past, is calculated to obscure rather than to enlighten and it is more eloquent in what it did not say, than in what it said. The very theme, Mr. Speaker, is a deception, '**STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS**', a theme which implies that there is a consultative, consensual, cooperative process in existence, a process which this Budget is designed to strengthen, and a process which would inform the policies and Programmes contained in the Budget. Indeed the Hon. Minister painted a rosy picture of a consultative approach out of which the 1997 Budget emerged, but we know because we have to face reality, notwithstanding all the flights of fancy by so many of my friends on the other side. We know that no such process of genuine consultation exists in this country and that the regime's exclusionary politics is at odds with such a process. If the Budget starts off from a false premise, as its foundations, then we will know that everything that follows is false and deceptive.

We do not have any process of consultation in this country and when consultation is constitutionally mandated, the approach is casual and perfunctory to the point of being insulting. I would like to illustrate what I am saying to Hon. Members from some correspondence I received from the Head of the Presidential Secretariat. I received a letter, Mr. Speaker, dated 9<sup>th</sup> December 1996 and it says.

*"Dear Mr. Hoyte,  
Please be advised that in accordance with the Constitution provisions..."*

That is what is said in the Constitution provisions,

*"...governing the composition of the Judicial Service Commission, His Excellency President C. Jagan is consulting you on the appointment of Justice Prem Persaud as a member of the Judicial Service Commission."*

And then it goes on,

*“Justice Prem Persaud has been recommended by the Chancellor of the Judiciary, and His Excellency President C. Jagan is in favour of his appointment.”*

Mr. Speaker, I was too conscious of my own self-esteem and dignity to pay any attention to this letter, to acknowledge it or reply to it, but I did issue a press release in which I published the letter, and at the end of the press release I could not resist the temptation to take a little dig at the author of the letter by pointing out that he did not even know my constitutional designation, because in his letter, he described me as Leader of the Minority Party; there is no such post in the Constitution. Apparently it was brought to his attention that I had issued this press release and he sent me another letter with exactly the same wording except that he changed my description to the correct description ‘Minority Leader’. Obviously he seemed to believe that the point of my objection had to do with the misdescription of my office. So up to now he doesn’t understand that this letter here does not, as far as I am concerned, constitute any kind of consultation or any genuine effort of consulting according to the spirit of the consultative process and the letter of the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, that is just one example, and there are so many other examples more important than that – which to my mind is trivial, in which this Government did not seem to understand the absolute importance of even apprising the Opposition of what it intended to do and seeking, at least, to get some understanding, some appreciation from us of Governmental policies and approaches. The regime obviously believes that it can go it alone. No amount of calling for partnership, no amount of playing that there is consultation, will change the reality and yet Mr. Speaker, this is really the crucial point, that this country is going to get no place and these policies are not going to be fruitful unless there is some kind of political culture developed in this country in which at least we can have dialogue one with the other.

We are told that there is a National Development Strategy. There is a lot of confusion about that, as to whose strategy it is but there was no consultation until the document or, at least, information about the document, was sprung on the Guyanese public. We were told when we asked Mr. Carter, who played an active part in this National Development Strategy, whose document it would be once it is published. He was at difficulties to understand and to explain, but by the time he got back to Atlanta – I attended a conference which he called on the 6<sup>th</sup> June last year – he had an answer. You see he had a problem. He could not say that it was a Government document; he could not say that, because if that were so what is the Carter Centre doing preparing a document for the Government? That would give the impression of partisanship. He couldn’t say that it is the Carter Centre’s document, because how could the Carter

Centre people sit down in Atlanta and create a document strategy for Guyana? So he was on the horns of a dilemma, but by the time he got back to Atlanta and probably consulted with his spin doctors he had an answer, that this document was in the ownership of the Guyanese people.

Mr. Speaker, we have a great difficulty there because the People's Progressive Party is claiming ownership of it, notwithstanding what the Hon. Minister has written in the Budget Statement, because in a leaflet published by the Guyana Information Service, which is entitled '**Thirty Facts You Should Know**', this statement appears: "*The PPP/Civic has prepared a National Development Strategy which President Jagan has delivered to Mr. Carter at Atlanta.*" The thing about it, Mr. Speaker, is that at that time the document was not completed. The documents I am talking about are the six or whatever number of volumes which constitute the National Development Strategy. The Hon. Member knows that the document was not ready because both of us were in Atlanta on the 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1996, when Mr. Carter himself explained that the document was not yet ready.

Mr. Speaker that is one example of non-consultation which is going to lead to serious problems in our country, because this document is going to be sterile and it is going to end up gathering cobwebs in one of the cupboards in the Ministry of Finance.

Again Mr. Speaker, we are told by the American Embassy— I am told that the Americans plan to have a military exercise in this county between the months of July and August. There is no word from the Government. When the Americans said to me that they are going to have this military exercise I pointed out to them that that was an inappropriate time because August is supposed to be the time for local government elections and in any event July/August would be virtually on the eve of any national elections that we were going to have. Of course, the Americans acting from a position of proponent power are not going to bother with Hugh Desmond Hoyte, the Leader of the People's National Congress, a Guyanese party. So they say to me "*Look, we have consulted with a large number of people in Guyana and they are satisfied that this exercise will bring benefits*".

So here is the contradiction that the Americans claim to have consulted the Guyanese people, but the Government of Guyana has not consulted anybody. But the Head of the Presidential Secretariat at a press conference arrogantly says, "*This exercise will go on*". Now that attitude is at a variance with the kind of partnership that the Hon. Minister is soliciting in his Budget Statement.

Similarly I can go on to the so-called Ship-rider Treaty, of which we know nothing at all other than reading garbled reports in the newspapers. The point I seek to make is basic and it is this: The regime cannot go it alone. There is absolutely no way that the People's Progressive Party by itself could hope to promote the development of this country, manage it in a way which brings about and maintains political stability and enables us

to move forward towards any desirable goals and objectives. There is no substitute for genuine consultation, and posturing and political propaganda and PR work are not substitutes for genuine consultation in good faith.

I considered it very important to start with this discussion about the need for a proper climate for consultation because, without it, all of the dreams and ideals and the various fancy words we've heard and we read about in the Budget Statement will not substitute for genuine consultation in good faith, and will not be realised at all because words and PR work are not going to change the essential reality of political life in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Speaker, the Budget has a fundamental flaw, because it has not an underlying philosophy designed to inform policy and to move this country forward in a structured way towards some nationally identified and desirable national goals and objectives. There is no conceptual framework within which the various projects and Programmes cohere so that one can find a certain correlation among the projects and Programmes which result in certain objectives, clearly defined, being achieved. As my colleague the Hon. Member Mr. Ivor Allen, said, the Budget seems to be made up of a random selection - a project here, a project there - but what is the relationship between them and how will we be able to draw or derive from the various projects and Programmes some kind of over arching philosophy which is moving us inexorably towards some goal or objective of a national nature?

Mr. Speaker, in other words, there is nothing in the Budget which shows us how we are going to move forward next year and the years ahead. It is a Budget which, if I may use a term familiar to Trinidadians is 'Now for Now'. It is only for the moment and doesn't project itself into the future in ways that make sense and are discernible. I contend that the Government needs to have a clear and unambiguous developmental policy.

We of the People's National Congress are in no doubt about our policy. We have a clear unequivocal view on what we want for this country and we want basically to move this country forward to a stage of rapid development so that Guyana can enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century with all the foundations in place to become a viable, prosperous, modern state.

The conditions that are necessary for this are not unclear. We have to build a free open society, where opinions are traded without fear and ideas are exchanged and, through the interplay of opinions national positions emerge and there is ferment in the intellectual life of our country. We need to build that society on democratic values and the practice of democracy, because these days we hear so much about participatory democracy; consultative democracy and so on and these things just are not happening, other than in the imagination of those people who mouth these slogans.

There can be no doubt in our minds that our economic systems must be based upon a market economy, in which private investment is given full

scope to be the agent of development and modernisation in which private investment is encouraged and attracted, in which, the private sector becomes the catalyst for growth; development; modernisation and all of these things being buttressed by social policies, because I am not talking about free-wheeling in unrestrained capitalism where the poor and the disadvantaged are crushed, but of a system where there are social policies to protect the poor and the weak and the disadvantaged.

Really I can find in the Budget no such clarity, no unequivocal commitment to these concepts that I have been talking about, notwithstanding some gushing applause from some companions of the Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I think that there has not been a clear understanding, grasp or appreciation of why it is important that the private sector should be given scope to play this role in development and modernisation, because, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister in his Budget Statement, in speaking about the private sector, said that it was important that the Government wanted the private sector to grow and expand because it was necessary and important that there should be an increase in high-paying jobs. But, that is to confuse justification with a spin-off. The private sector is important because it is the catalyst for development; it is the catalyst for modernisation. Without it, we are not going to move into a modern era. And I know of no country in the world that has made any progress, without massive private investment and a market economy. And I have said that jobs, higher incomes, good social, cultural and recreational conditions, all of those things are the spin-off from private sector development in our country.

The other thing Mr. Speaker is that, unfortunately, there is still a latent hostility to the private sector.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Listen to me my friend; I am prepared to forget the abuse of the private sector as being blood suckers and parasites. Let's forget that.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** – Don't bother who said that, I am telling you what I am saying today.

Mr. Speaker, there is the latent hostility that is still there. We see it in many different ways, in the things that the Government does and in some things that they say. For example, Mr. Speaker, if my friend wants me to explain a little more carefully, there is the effort to sell the National Bank of Industry and commerce (NBIC) shares. The Government has set an extraordinary price of \$100 for each \$1 share. The Republic Bank - and I am not an agent for the Republic Bank. They really can't pay me.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Republic Bank is the only bidder and yet one of the reasons why there has been some hesitation or reluctance to accept the offer from Republic Bank is that there are hard core members of the PPP who are talking about a foreign bank. They are opposed to Republic Bank. They call it a foreign bank. Well, now, if you are committed to private sector development, it doesn't matter whether it is foreign or native. The idea is that you have private entities operating in your country in accordance with your laws and being involved in the development of your country.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that there has been no effort to deal with the tax regime in this country. There have been a number of tinkering, though, you put on a two percent turnover tax and you carry back the corporation tax from 35 percent to 45 percent, you give a little tax concession to shrimp and fish exporters, because some PPP persons is in that business. The point I am making is that this is tinkering, not attempting to create a fiscal regime in which people can be comfortable.

Now, it is imperative that we deal with the tax situation, because in Guyana we have the highest tax burden in relation to GDP in the whole of Latin America. It is 35 percent in Guyana. On average it is 14 percent in Latin America, and in Asia it is 16 percent. And what is happening is that because of the failure to tackle the tax situation comprehensively, the burden is falling upon a few people, large numbers of people are escaping the net, and there is this propensity to tinker, rather than to confront the problem in a bold and imaginative way.

Mr. Speaker, the People's National Congress started the process of comprehensive tax reform when Minister Carl Greenidge reduced the number of corporation taxes; they had proliferated. We reduced the incidence of the taxes and were moving towards a certain rationalization of consumption taxes and other taxes. The theory we accept and the experience, even our own experience, has been that it is not high taxes which bring maximum yield. It is more fruitful to have a reasonable tax regime because people then would have less incentive to avoid or evade taxes and there would be a better opportunity for profitability of businesses, for saving and investment.

That is why I want to say to this Government that it is not sufficient to talk about the private sector. The Government has to do things to make the private sector feel comfortable, and to enable the private sector to get on with the business of investment.

Now, where is the support for the private sector? Over the years, we have heard all kinds of statements, but, none of them, Mr. Speaker, committing the Government in very clear measures to private sector development. We are told, for example, that there is going to be an Investment Guide. Better still, there is going to be an Investment Code at some time in the sweet by and by. I want to say to you, that investors are

not really interested in vague promises, Produce the Code. But, more important than the Code, Mr. Speaker, is a climate of confidence. You can have all the Codes; you can have all the legislation, unless what you say, what you do and what you genuinely believe in bring about confidence in people, both the local investment community and the international investment community, you still are not going to get investment.

Mr. Speaker, I received from GO-INVEST a document. I was a little ashamed, because GO-INVEST is supposed to have highly qualified technicians there. This is a document that was supposed to show what investments we had in the county last year. A hotchpotch of proposals, suggestions, hopes and expectations, nothing that gives you a clear picture of what the investments were. And, indeed, it is with a good reason that the Hon. Minister in this Budget Statement has made absolutely no reference to investments made in 1996, nor has he given any projections for 1997. The reason is simple. The reason is that since the People's National Congress demitted office there has not been a single major new investment in this economy. Not a single one.

My colleague, the Hon. Minister Shree Chan, was opening the Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry (GBTI) branch at Corriverton – I read it in the newspapers or saw it on TV and I don't recall which – and he said: *"Look at this thing here – now people saying that we don't have investment?"* –

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** What has happened, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the investment last year, a lot of it has to do with the replacement of machinery.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** My friend we are talking about new investment that will expand the production base.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** You are having growth for what? You are having growth for BARAMA, OMAI and Iwokrama. Don't bother with the Forest Sector.

The point which the Hon. Minister is missing is that this is a lopsided kind of growth. It does not spread across. You have a few entities which are propelling that growth. We are in that unhappy situation because there has not been a continuing investment which is really what the game is all about.

Mr. Speaker, you know we have lost a lot of credibility. There was a time when investors saw this country as a place of opportunity. Between 1989 and 1992 we attracted into this economy more than US\$1.5 billion,

represented by the OMAI investment and the BARAMA investment and Iwokrama investment. I beg your pardon. I am in error? US\$.5 billion. Accept my apology. US\$.5 billion. Half a billion US. It was a slip of the tongue, not the fault of the mind. We had investment because people believed in our policies; they accepted our policy position as being genuine. My friend said that we gave away the county. You know, the PPP in Opposition used to say, OMAI was a sweetheart deal.

The Hon. Prime Minister will tell you that in 1993 he went to the United States of America, I think it was Miami, to a conference called '**Investing in the Americas**'. That was a conference in which people were talking about investment in the mining sector, and there he discovered what I discovered in 1992, that we had the harshest fiscal regime for gold-mining investment. We had harsher terms than Venezuela, Mexico, Peru, Bolivia and Brazil. But, there were some pluses for us.

Why did people come here? We are English speaking. We had a good work force, literate, trainable and so on. Getting in and out was fairly easy though not as easy as we would like it to be. But, still the PPP were saying 'Sweetheart deal'. They said that when they came into office, they were going to overturn these investments. Until, they made the mistake of employing Price Waterhouse to investigate OMAI and the general tax regime related to gold-mining. Well, you have Morris Odle. Thank you for reminding me. Dr. Odle from the UN Transitional Agency came and investigated these contracts and reported to the Government that there was nothing like a sweetheart deal. These were good arrangements.

And then, Mr. Speaker, the Price Waterhouse people found that out of 14, I think it was, countries they had examined including Brazil, the United States, Canada, Mexico, Peru, Australia, the only country that got a better return from the fiscal regime was Australia, so we had driven a very hard deal, there was no question of any 'sweetheart deal.' And so it is. But, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to go on with those things. I think we need to deal clearly with more important things, not about statements that are wild and have no foundation in fact.

So, there has been lot of talk, Mr. Speaker, about privatisation. It is a very funny story. If you go back and you read the various Budgets and so on, privatisation in 1995, they were going to bring to the point of sale GNCB and all kinds of things – Guyana Pharmaceutical Corporation – not yet done; Guyana Stockfeeds Limited, National Oil Company, Printers Ltd., Mortgage Finance Bank, GCIS, that's 1995.

And then, when you come now to '96 same story.

### [Interruption]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Well, we got the same story; Guyana Stores, and 1997 again we are being told about bringing to the point of sale Guyana Stores, Stockfeed, in about three years, and this privatisation cannot take place.

Really, I don't want to deal with GEC, because that story is so horrendous, there is so much corruption and mismanagement and questionable activities surrounding that. That would call for a full debate in itself.

I was talking, Mr. Speaker, about the loss of credibility by Guyana. Last month there was the Annual Miami Conference. I was there - my friends invited me. I still have a lot of friends in the international community and regionally.

Mr. Speaker, I hope it was not the Minister, but there was a report saying that I was part of the Guyana delegation.

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** It was in a GO-INVEST document. I will not break a lance over that.

Mr. Speaker, when we went there, we thought we would go and look at the Guyana booth. It was a matter for tears; there were two young ladies in this booth; there were about three or four badly printed brochures, there was not a single exhibit, not a bottle of rum, not a jar of jam, not a piece of ply board - that was in the Guyana exhibits.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Since you tickle me, I am going to tell you more.

There was no flag outside the exhibition room. We drew this to the attention of Dr. Ivor Mitchell, and asked him where the Guyana flag was. He said, Mr. Speaker, *"Well, I am not the leader of the delegation. A meeting was held at the President's Office to constitute the delegation."* So, as far as he was concerned, Mr. Yesu Persaud was the leader of the Guyana delegation.

The next day, we saw Mr. Yesu Persaud, and we teased him about the flag, and Mr. Persaud said, *"Me, me, I got nothing to do with Guyana delegation. I am here in my capacity as a Director of CLAA."*

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** But that is not the whole story. There was the Guyana delegation that apparently has no leader.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the US Department issued an invitation to people to go to a session. Well, there were several sessions in which their Heads of Mission were going to talk about investment opportunities in their respective countries, so we decided we would go to the Guyana session, and we went there.

Mr. Speaker, would you believe it? Nobody turned up to the party. Not a single American or other foreign businessman or potential investor. So, here you are, a group of Guyanese.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** I was there. Mr. Jerry Gouveia, Mr. Stanley Ming, Mr. Kats Khan, Mr. Wesley Kirton who is the OAS Representative in the Bahamas, a Guyanese. There was another young lady who told me she was a Guyanese; she was there out of curiosity. I think the American Chargé d'affaires, Mr. Simon, must have been very, very embarrassed. He said, *"since we are here, let us talk among ourselves."*

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** And then he said, *"Well, Dr. Mitchell, you are the Head of GO-INVEST, maybe we should start with you"*. And Dr. Mitchell said, *"I will defer to my Chairman, Mr. Yesu Persaud."*

Mr. Yesu Persaud said *"Me, me? I got nothing to do with you all. Don't you see that I don't go to you all meetings? I don't come. I am a man who values time."*

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** *"I ain't wasting my time with you all."*

Since you tickled me and you wanted to know, I have told you the story. I could tell you more, except that I want to get on with my intervention.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister made a great ploy of the macro-economic indicators. Those indicators are not unuseful, but I am sure that the Minister himself had some difficulty in swallowing the inflation numbers which he flaunted, and certainly every housewife would have the same difficulty.

However, Mr. Speaker, the real thing about how well the economy is going, or doing, is not only macroeconomic indicators, but how the developments are impacting upon the standard of living and the quality of life.

When we look at that, we have to be very distressed, because in terms of the human resources in our country and the social sectors, there is no evidence of the beneficial impact on them. For example, unemployment remains unconscionably high. You go to every urban centre, you go to every village, and there are so many young people liming on the streets. Young, bright, beautiful young people who want to work. They've gone through the school system, they're intelligent, they're educated, and some of them have skills. There are some young people I met at Linden who are machinists and welders, there are no jobs, and that is telling you that investment is not taking place to create the new jobs that the Minister so dearly would like to see in our economy. That is telling you also that you have to put in place the policies to attract investment, so that there could be the economic activities that would generate new employment.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, on the question of wages which are so very low. The point is that you can have the most beautiful plans, but you are not going to get time implemented, successfully or at all, without the necessary human resources. You know that. Why is it then that the Government will not take the bull by the horns, and increase salaries to something that is adequate?

Well then, you are in a no-win situation because if you are not going to pay salaries, well then you will have to accept that you are going to get nowhere with your Programme.

**[The Speaker:** That is not quite true.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, you say that is not quite true. Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something. I've been looking at the various Ministries, looking at their personnel and the range of vacancies between 35 and 50 percent and more than 50 percent in critical Ministries and agencies. In the Auditor General's Department, it is 50 percent approximately, Magistrates 40 percent approximately, Attorney-General 40 percent, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 50 percent, Ministry of Agriculture 30 percent, Lands and Surveys 50 percent, and Mr. Minister, are you talking about sending teams of surveyors to give Amerindians their lands? Where are the surveyors going to come from? The private sector has few, and they are in demand. My predication is, Mr. Speaker, that this here is just a dream. It will not happen because of the absence of human resources.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Similarly, with Hydromet – 50 percent, Fisheries – 59 percent, Ministry of Health, Teaching. It is horrendous, and I don't think that we should casually say, "*Well, somebody destroyed the human infrastructure,*" or think, as the Prime Minister seems to think, that notwithstanding this shortage of people, we are going to make it. Make it where? Make headway? In this direction, Prime Minister?

It is not that we are not producing fine people, good professional people, skilled people, but where do you find them? We are training them for export. You find them from Trinidad going right up, to Jamaica and Belize, and, of course, Canada and the United States.

I was in St. Lucia a few weeks ago, and I was told that we have a Guyanese community of over 1000 highly trained professionals. I met with some of them, and I asked them, "*Well, why is it?*" These were teachers, nurses, engineers, some pharmacists. I asked them: "*Well, why is it you're here?*" Talking to them, I realise they were not happy. They preferred to be here. They said they could not make ends meet when in Guyana.

If that is so, we're going to continue to train people for export, and I'm saying that it is no point turning away from the real problem of wages.

The Minister must take the plunge, and I am saying this to you that if you could create a climate in which the investments will flow, you could increase wages to adequate levels because that investment will generate the wealth and the Government revenues to enable you to pay increased wages. And that is the key to the whole thing.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Without that, you're getting no place. That is what the People's National Congress has been advocating, and that is what the People's National Congress will do when it wins the next election.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, let us look at the social sector again, what has happened with housing? Mr. Speaker, we have heard something that would be very comic if it were not so tragic, because the demand for housing is building up to dangerous proportions. There are so many people who are homeless. We see them all over, not only in the towns now but also in the villages, and undoubtedly, we have not been able to come to grips with the housing situation. There's no point, Mr. Speaker, in fooling people by telling them all kinds of things that will not happen.

In 1973, the government promised that it would establish a mechanism for housing by meeting the needs of the low-income levels, and it said this, *"The President's thrust, for the development of low-cost housing, making use of newer methods of producing building blocks which are being piloted at IAST."* They are still piloting, they can't find their way because I remember so well His Excellency saying that he had discovered a revolutionary way to solve the housing problems. You get a chainsaw, you go in the forest, you cut the logs and you get mud and you build your house, because he saw that in Vietnam.

Then again, in 1994, Mr. Speaker, the Government promised, in addition to developing sites and services, to develop a scheme for 5,000 houses in the Timehri/Soesdyke area. Not one of those houses is to be seen.

Here again, in 1995, we were told that there is a massive programme of applications for house lots throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, don't let us talk about house lots. What has been happening, constitutes a cruel hoax upon the citizens of this country. So many people are being fooled and tricked into believing they're going to get a house lot, so they put their hands in a bag, they pluck out a piece of paper and they're told, *"Well, lot 20 or lot 25 is yours,"* but they cannot build anything because the land is not developed. It has no infrastructure, and the piece of paper is not even a legal title.

Citizens are being hoodwinked, and so many people have a little scrap of paper, and they can't even go and point to a piece of land and say, *"This*

*is mine.*" In any event Mr. Speaker, they cannot build because of the prohibitive cost of housing.

Mr. Speaker, if I may use Shakespearian English, we get the unkindest cut of all in 1997. Now the Minister is not talking about building 5,000 houses, or talking about regularising squatting areas. In 1994, they were to regularise 6,000 squatting areas, and when we pointed out that this country didn't have 6,000 squatting areas, didn't even have 60, the Minister insisted. That was not my friend, but his predecessor.

Mr. Speaker, what is the Minister telling us about housing? That he is going to give some kind of tax breaks to institutions which lend people up to \$1.5 million for homes, provided the homes do not cost more than \$2 million. That is also a cruel hoax. The average citizens cannot find \$1.5 million, cannot service the loan. This is not substitute, absolutely no substitute, for a programme that would make a dent in the housing demand in this country.

What we want, Mr. Speaker, is to approach infrastructure development, including housing, in the modern way. Government cannot build the houses, so let us not fool ourselves. What you want are private sector people who will come in with innovative schemes to build houses and to utilise additional lands, to build shopping malls and all kinds of creative schemes that I don't want to go into today.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** What I am saying is that there has been no impact upon the social sectors. Nothing has moved. The situation has deteriorated like all these macroeconomic indicators and I challenge the Minister of Housing to tell me where all these houses are.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** How many houses have you built? What we have Mr. Speaker, are a number of sign posts saying 'Government Sponsored Housing Scheme.'

The worst impact has been on the children of the poor. There has been another insidious assault on them that has to do with their education. In the peculiar circumstances of this country, we have to ensure that our educational system does not exclude the children of the poor from the highest quality of education they can get in this country and this is what the PPP has been doing, by the introduction of an indiscriminate, across-the-board fee paying system at the University of Guyana.

Mr. Speaker, I am told that the Minister of Education said that you have a full house at the university. Why then did the Pro-Chancellor issue an advertisement calling upon children who could not get guarantors to go and see him? The system is locking out the children of the poor.

In 1972, Mr. Speaker, at an Annual General Meeting of the Caribbean Development Bank, Arthur Lewis as the President of the Bank, made a remarkable speech. He talked about education and he pointed out that we complain about the brain drain with our people going North but that there was a greater brain drain in our countries in this part of the world because the education system was such that it failed and these were his words which I have never forgotten – “*to unlock the brain power of the children of the poor*”.

You have all of these intelligent, bright children who could not even get to secondary school level because their parents could not pay. We are talking about a country that needs to go forward; we are talking about the need to have our manpower in place. Don't tell me about the United States, England and India or somewhere like that. They are the peculiar circumstances of Guyana and the society has to find ways and means of ensuring that the children of the poor are not denied the opportunity for them to develop themselves and their potential so that they can be the best people they can be.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** You get sometimes, Mr. Speaker, some odd logic. All kinds of letters appear in the press. I myself pay them no mind, whereas some people say that free education is responsible for a decline in the standard of education. Rubbish; in so far as there is a decline, it has to do with our inability to retain teachers. The best teachers are still being produced but, as I said, we are producing them for export.

What I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is that the People's National Congress will jettison, dismantle, this pernicious fee-paying system, this indiscriminate system of payment across-the-board without discriminating between the children of the rich and the children of the poor.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, there will be no question of abolishing free education at secondary level as the People's Progressive Party is threatening to do.

We know that corruption is gnawing at the entrails of the body, political and social, in our country and yet the Hon. Minister does not utter a word. He says nothing about efforts or proposals to curb this dangerous trend.

We are saying that too heavy a social and economic cost is arising from corruption. I found it very amusing that the Minister should be telling us about the Public Sector investment projects that have achieved 99 percent and all those percentage implementations. That is not the issue. Implemented how? We know that a lot of substandard work is done.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Don't tell me of 90 percent implementation when you know that through corruption you get bad work, substandard work, you get projects which are in the books but you can't find on the ground.

What I'm saying is what the Auditor General said. Read the Auditor General's Report for 1993. Mr. Speaker I don't want to go through the catalogue of corruption which has engulfed this nation but I am rather saddened at the attitude of the Government.

When these things happen, there is a tendency to cover up. The better course of action would be to accept that some corruption has gone on and to do something about it. But the People's Progressive Party has not taken any action against major corrupt people in this country, including Members of Parliament.

When the Auditor General's Report came out for 1995 there was a terrible report that the Hon. Minister of Finance was engaged in a conversation with the Head of the Presidential Secretariat. He did not know that the reporters' tape recorders were on and that those tape recorders are very sensitive. What was the Minister saying? *"We must cover up. We must cover up, Jagdeo. What are we going to say about the Auditor General's Report it is coming out next week"*.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** What point of order? Do you not want me to tell the people about your efforts to cover up?

I want to ask the Hon. Minority Leader, with the greatest respect, to give us the source of the document from which he is quoting.

That is what I am saying

**[Mr. Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud:** You have to do that first.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** This is from the transcript of a tape which was made of the Minister. If you want me to bring the tape and play it here, I will bring it and play it for all the people to hear because what we have is strong evidence of conspiracy to cover up corruption. You want me to read it? You want me to give you a copy? My friend, in my capacity, I am in receipt of many documents, much information, some of which I don't use, some of which I don't think it is in the public interest to use. I am making a point, it is a very important point, that the People's Progressive Party reacts to corruption by wanting to cover it up. You can't tell me to read. If the Speaker tells me to read, I will read it.

**[Laughter]**

[**The Speaker:** Under the Standing Order, he ought not to do to that.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Let not your hearts be troubled! I will hold a press conference and I will produce this tape. You have a distinctive voice, and a distinctive pronunciation and the people who took the recording will be there.

I don't want to waste too much time on the corruption matter but I think that it is important that I should put on the record what the Auditor General said.

I move on. This is not what Hoyte is saying, not what the People's National Congress is saying, but what the Auditor General of this country is saying – he says on page 2 of his report for 1995 – that

*“...because of the significance of the comments as contained in the relevant sections of my report relating to the statement on outstanding loans and advances made from the Consolidated Fund, I am unable to form an opinion, whether it properly represents the state of affairs as at 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1995.”*

A little later on, he says:

*“...the consolidated Fund which is the single most important account of the Government was overdrawn by \$22 billion as at 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1995 compared to an overdraft of 10 billion at 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1994.”*

The significant increase in overdraft was mainly due to failure to reconcile the various Government bank accounts and to pay over the sums due to the Consolidated Fund.

He was also saying that nobody is bothering with the Central Tender Board but projects are going to the Cabinet for approval and the Auditor General is saying that it is indeed inconceivable to have a situation where Cabinet would have to make major decisions relative to the award of contracts. He said that documentation of the logical sequence of events leading up to the awards could not be produced. On what basis is the Cabinet making decisions? On the say so of somebody? No supporting documentation. He goes on to talk about the famous Ministry of Works fire.

In February 1996, a fire gutted a building housing the Accounting Department of the Ministry of Public Works, Communications and Regional Development.

As a result, the accounting records, vouchers and other documents necessary for the conduct of the audit of this Ministry, as well as that of the office of the Prime Minister and the Civil Aviation Department were destroyed. Proper audit could not, therefore, be carried out in respect of these entities I would ask the question that the Roman Jurists used to ask: *cui bono?* Who benefited?

Finally, Mr. Speaker, in relation to the Ministry of Health, drugs and medical supplies totalling \$300 million were purchased mainly through the subdivision of contracts to bring them within the authorised limits of the Accounting Officer.

In addition, the controls necessary for the proper accountability of the drugs and medical supplies were substantially over ridden and as a result it was difficult to establish whether the Ministry actually received all the items for which payments were made.

So you have a situation, Mr. Speaker, wide open for all kinds of irregularities and corrupt practices. What I am saying to the Minister is that these are matters that should be aggressively pursued. There is no point in hiding our heads in the sand, no point saying “*Well, people are going to beat us over the head. The Opposition is going to attack us.*” That is not the best course for this country. Surely the Opposition will attack you for all of these things, but we will support you and applaud you if you try to put in place procedures which will minimise irregularities.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, I don't want to talk about the Electricity Corporation. That is so shocking that I don't want to. There is a shocking electricity situation. We will leave that for the Public Utilities Commission and to the action brought by one Mustafah Ali against the Corporation and others.

Mr. Speaker, we have a beautiful country. We hear about its potential wealth: we hear about its riches; we hear about Eldorado and about all kinds of things. Potential wealth is not real wealth, not actual wealth. Potential wealth cannot build roads, hospitals and schools and provide our people with training and scholarships and so on. We have to convert that potential wealth into actual wealth. The only way to do that is through investment and given our circumstances, that investment has to come massively from the private sector, because I believe that, given the resources and given appropriate policies, we can grow ourselves out of debt and we can create in this country conditions where every single Guyanese can live a decent comfortable life in security and harmony. In order to do this, we have to cast aside the tired destructive conflictual policies and work for a civil society in which all citizens feel that they are entitled to the benefits and the opportunities which this country and this economy can provide.

I do not believe, though apparently the Government believes in what the Greek dramatists used to call the *deus ex machine*, where a god would come from the ceiling, so to speak out of heaven, onto the stage and sort out all the problems of the various actors. I do not believe that the *deus ex machine* will come here and solve our problems for us. That is not going to happen. So it is no use placing our faith in Carter's NDI or somebody else's

programme and policies. We have to set our objectives and priorities and we have to decide, as a nation, if we have the will, to make whatever adjustments we have to make to achieve national objectives consensually arrived at. We are not going to get that in an atmosphere of victimisation, despite the eloquence of some of my friends on the other side who say: *“all is fine, all is well with the world. No victimisation, no harassment. We all adhere to the rule of law.”*

We all know that is not true. We are in a mode of denial and it is a cynical thing because I read an editorial in which the writer was saying that he gave the Government a clean bill of health on racism, corruption and adherence to the rule of law. I said to myself: *“Which country is he talking about? Which Government?”* Because, Mr. Speaker, when people, who suffer from these things, gain the impression that persons in authority are denying that these things exist, well then there is only one way open to them and that is the way that none of us would want to support, but it is that so many people find to be the only way in conditions where there is denial of what everybody knows in country.

**[Interruption:** Whenever you talk, you are threatening.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** If you think it is a threat, I am just saying it is a reality, a reality on the ground. I am saying that in many instances when people decide to take matters in their own hands the People’s National Congress might have no alternative but to be sympathetic with them.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** I don’t change my view about anything. I am dealing with a political reality, and the sooner you understand that, the better it will be for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard all kinds of things here. We heard the Hon. Member. What I said there I meant and I will say it again, shoot to kill, if you are being threatened.

**[The Speaker:** Hon. Member, do not deal with that.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Yes Mr., Speaker. What will work in this country is well-known. What will work in this country are not vain hopes and idle dreams. What will work in this country is good governance and other things that will promote it.

Good governance involves appropriate economic policies which I would describe as being market-oriented policies and private investment and private sector involvement. Just, fair and equitable, honest Government administration, the building up of citizens’ confidence in public functionaries and Government policies, a sense of security. This is very important, because there are so many people who labour under a feeling of

general insecurity. We need policies to facilitate investment, large and small, on a continuing basis.

I should say about security that it is important that we put the Police Force in a position to discharge its mandate. The Police Force is nearly 1,000 people under-strength. The Police Force is not mobile. People telephone the Police and they say that they do not have vehicles.

I read in the Budget Statement that the Hon. Minister is allocating \$185 million to the Police Force to acquire vehicles and equipment. I looked at the Estimates and could find \$45 million. So it might well be that the Hon. Minister has an explanation, but I am saying that he should have given it to us. Don't tell us that you are allocating \$185 million and when we go to the Estimate we find only \$45 million.

Now, given the situation in this country with the policies I have outlined, we can move this country forward and prosper – all of us.

The People's National Congress has no time to waste. We are not going to be distracted by new gimmicks. We are not going to be diverted from our objectives by all kinds of mushrooming ideas as we approach elections because we are geared for action. We have a single objective and that objective is to win the next elections -

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** - not merely to oust the People's Progressive Party. That is to limit an objective for the People's National Congress, but to install a Government that is competent and honest and can create an environment in which all of our citizens and interested foreigners can participate with enthusiasm and commitment in the grand enterprise of propelling our country into the 21st century as a viable modern State.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, this is the task, this is the labour, to which my Party and I will be devoting our every moment and all of our energies.

**[Applause]**



**SEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF THE  
CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA**



## Motion on the St. Lucia Statement: 29th July, 1998

*“Be it resolved:*

*That the National Assembly notes the St. Lucia Statement with Agreement which was made on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1998.”*

**[The Minister of Foreign Affairs]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to intervene in this debate, but having regard to the way in which it has proceeded, I think it is necessary to speak briefly.

I confess that I have been particularly perturbed by the trend that the debate has taken. I myself thought that here was an excellent occasion to demonstrate the spirit of reconciliation and to give a signal, not only to this National Assembly but to the entire nation, that we were serious about proceeding with the various issues that are causing so much difficulties in our political and other relations. I think it is unhelpful for the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs to place the emphasis of his speech on corruption and violence in the past, because this is nothing about which the Hon. Minister ought to be proud. On his side there were scenes of unbelievable violence in this country. There were people who were killed.

Only recently I was looking at the roll call of persons killed between April and August, 1964, and it was a terrible report of people killed by the People's Progressive Party, of the attempt to assassinate Mr. Peter Taylor by the PPP's assassin, Dougla. All of those terrible things happened from which the PPP cannot absent itself. So I don't understand how the Hon. Minister introduces a Motion that is intended to set a platform for us to move forward into a new set of arrangements in the civil society by making the approach that he did. But he did, and he was followed by other speakers. In those circumstances, it appears to me, Mr. Speaker, that I ought to make certain positions very clear.

First of all, we had a right to protest against the election results, because we believe then and we still believe that elections were rigged, manipulated and massively fraudulent, and there is nothing in the audit which says to the contrary. The audit was supposed to be a forensic audit and the forensic part seems to have been forgotten. But even so, all the Cross team said was that they found no fraudulent ballots. Mr. Cross himself explained that what he meant by that, was that he found no ballot that was not a genuine one printed by the official printers. The question is not whether the ballots were forged. The question was how the ballots got into the boxes and that was really the forensic part which was not done.

Mr. Cross and his team said that they found evidence of omissions,

irregularities and specific illegalities which gave rise to suspicion. One would have thought that in that audit they would have listed all of those, the irregularities, the illegalities and omissions, and that they would have sought to explain or find out, first of all, how they occurred, why they occurred and to what extent they had an influence on the due irregularities of the elections. But these things were not done. They did not.

For example, having found that the counterfoils could not be reconciled with the votes, they left a huge question mark. Having found that the ID cards could not be reconciled with the votes they also left a huge question mark. As a matter of fact, they claimed that over 40,000 persons voted with ID cards. Having subsequently been approached by the Hon. Member – he said so. He said that he approached Mr. Cross – Mr. Cross purported to change this all by himself to say that it is not forty something thousand: *“We made a mistake in the number of ID cards that we could not account for in Region 6, but what we will now say is that there were several thousand of ID cards missing and that it was an exercise in futility.”* Those were the words used to try to reconcile the ID cards with the ballots.

In the light of all of that and a host of other matters that I don't want to get into – irregularities and things not consistent with the law – they came to no conclusion. They said two things: (1) that there was no forged ballot paper – and nobody ever alleged that there was; and (2) that the votes counted in the boxes tallied roughly with the votes declared by the Chief Elections Officer. So what? Nobody made an issue about that. We made an issue of the question: How did the votes get into the boxes? So to continue saying that the Audit Report cast any light upon who won or who lost the elections is to really continue to whistle in the dark.

The Hon. Member spoke about killing. He said that PNC killed people. Let me read from the record which we have compiled. On 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1964, Mr. Peter Taylor was shot along with his female companion by the PPP's agent 'Douglas.' On June 12, the Abraham family, Mr. Abraham, his wife and seven children were massacred in an arson by the PPP; Mr. and Mrs. George Sealey were shot at on their farm at Buxton; nine-year-old Kenneth Wilkinson, who was tending his parents' sheep at the back of Buxton, was brutally murdered. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, Allan Briton was shot to death in Mahaicony and on July 1<sup>st</sup> Emile Brown was killed at Strathavon –

**[Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud: On a point of order!]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** What point of order?

**[Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud: I am entitled to that.]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Go ahead.

**[Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr. Speaker, if information of the nature being presented is to have any credibility, then the source**

has to be identified, and as a creditable source at that. The Standing Order is lucidly clear on the point.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I agree with you. I am identifying the source as a research paper prepared by the research officer of the People's National Congress from the archives. I have it here and I will share it with you.

On July 1, Postmaster Ulric Wallerson was chopped to death.

**[The Deputy Speaker:** Mr. Hoyte please. With your experience in this House, Sir, you know better than most Members, so please keep it down.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** But the question of murder was raised by the Hon. Minister when he said he was reading from his copious notes and was referring to Jean Paul Sartre who is unknown to philosophy and literature.

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that if the PPP raises these questions we shall reply in kind. We are not here to be attacked and to sit by quietly. We shall counter-attack on every field and in every way.

Mr. Speaker, we are told about Parliament. Our position was extremely clear. First of all, we protested as we have a right to do. People are protesting all over the world and are protesting every day against perceived injustices and irregularities, we said initially that we were not going to consider the question of Parliament until after the Audit. We were not even going to consider it. After the Audit we said that we were not going to come into Parliament if Parliament was going to proceed in the old ways in which it proceeded during the past administration, not bringing up our Questions for answering, not bringing up our Motions for debate.

The Hon. Member Mr. Persaud, keeps perpetuating the untruth that we had no Questions.

Mr. Speaker, that was an issue and it was raised successively by Mr. Norton in his dialogue with Dr. Luncheon, and by Mr. Haslyn Parris in his dialogue with the Hon. Member Mr. Shree Chan. Those were matters that we were very clear about.

One of the things about the Herdmanston Accord was that Mrs. Janet Jagan agreed that the PPP would ensure that Parliament functioned effectively, meaning that our Questions will be answered promptly, our Motions will be brought up for debate and we will meet on Wednesday. Those were things that has not been happening.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** The English Language is not our native language, I agree, but I think you have some understanding of it. I am talking about the last

Parliament, that these things did not happen in the last Parliament and, therefore, we were not coming into this Parliament unless we had a commitment that the Parliament would be functioning more effectively. We have that commitment and we have a number of Questions and Motions. We will see how the Parliament proceeds with them.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member Mr. Shree Chan, talked about the rule of law. He ought to be very, very careful about how he does that, because when a lady takes the process of court and throws it over her shoulder, we are not seeing the rule of law. That is contempt of law.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** When the Government sets itself up as a 'scoff-law', the ordinary man in the street believes that he also could hold the law in contempt. I don't want to get into a long story about the various illegalities, disrespect for court decisions and things like that, but I am saying is don't raise those issues as if your hands are clean; they are not. And we ought not to get into a denial mode.

Now, why were people protesting? Why were they marching? They are marching because they knew that the election results were not feasible. They were people who saw what happened in their own divisions and heard entirely different results being announced. As the protests grew the causes began to emerge as being wider than elections and people were protesting against grievances. What were those grievances? Victimisation, discrimination, lack of jobs, executive lawlessness. All of these things were part of the grievances which people perceived and felt. And when the **Herdmanston Accord** was signed, they honestly believed that we had an agreement which would not solve their problems overnight, but which would create mechanisms to:

- (a) Reduce the recurrences of some of the things which they protested against.
- (b) Provide procedures for them to have redress in the future.

It was when the dialogue ceased, dialogue at the level of Norton and Luncheon, dialogue at the level of Shree Chan and Parris, that people felt that there was not hope and they took to the streets again. The fact that they took to the streets again told its own story.

The fact that they took to the streets again was evidence that the calm which was being seen was really a surface calm and under it people were very angry and resentful. So they took to the streets again. The significance and the importance of the **St. Lucia Statement** is that they are giving us a second change. The calm is not peace, it is a semblance of peace. Resentment is still there, and unless people perceive an improvement in governance, unless they see a lessening of victimisation,

unless they see a diminution in the incidence of corruption, victimisation and executive lawlessness, they will take to the streets again. That is the point I want to make.

[**An Hon. Member:** That is a threat.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** That is not a threat. Every time a truth is told, it is a threat.

I said for example, that unless we complete the Constitution Reform Process in the time agreed on, there is going to be trouble in this country. That is not a threat, that is a statement of fact. What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that it is very unfortunate that that this debate took the turn that it took and I lay the blame squarely at the feet of the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The **Herdmanston Accord**, reinforced by the **St. Lucia Statement** gives us an opportunity to put our political house in order. We seize it or we don't seize it. We seize it and the prospects are good. We spend out time telling lies, distortions, and misrepresentations – getting stuck in the denial mode that all is well, that people don't have grievances. I read that, I hear that. It is not true that there is victimisation. I hear that, I read that – it is not true that there is executive lawlessness – I hear that. That is being stuck in a denial mode and if the PPP remains stuck in a denial mode, we are going to make no progress. And if we don't make progress, we are in for serious difficulties in this country.

It doesn't matter whether the Hon. Member believes that that is a threat or not. That is the result of my own analysis and my own knowledge of what is happening on the ground and among ordinary people. The people who are hurting are primarily the ordinary folk, the ordinary citizens – people who are looking forward not only to simple things but basic things – a better quality of life, better housing, good schools for their children, better health services, and good incomes.

The question of Parliament is not going to be of any interest to them, because they do not have newspapers, TV stations and radios. What they have is their power to mobilise themselves on the streets. Let that not be the political norm in the future of this country. Let it not be, because if by -

[**Interruption**]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Well you do not have a monopoly. You only had an audience of 3,000 people on the Corentyne and that should tell you something. I want to tell you something further – Proclamation or no Proclamation, you cannot stop the people from going on the streets when they want to do that. No police action is going to stop them.

[**Applause**]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I can only express regret again on the way this debate has proceeded and the fact that some people don't seem to be able to extricate themselves from the past. The Hon. Minister seemed to be such in the past – he seems to feel that debate consists in 'cussing out'. It does not. We have here, I say again, an opportunity. Let us take it because I don't see where we are going to go from here if we have messed up this first opportunity for conciliatory action in pursuing the various things enshrined in the **Herdmanston Accord** and the **St. Lucia Statement**.

[Applause]

## Requests for Leave to move the Adjournment of the Assembly on Definite Matters of Urgent Public Importance - Dumping of Cocaine in the Atlantic: 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1998

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, we have a matter of great interest to the people of this country that has already elicited spurious denials from the Government and I feel that it ought to be brought to the attention of this Honourable House for the Government to answer the serious questions and implications arising from this matter.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> October, the law enforcement agencies of this country recovered a large cache of cocaine said to be about 2.6 tons from a vessel moored alongside the wharves in the Demerara River, *MV Danielsen*, and on the 26<sup>th</sup> October, the captain of the vessel was convicted and imprisoned for possession of this cocaine. The cache was ordered to be destroyed and indeed it was the duty of the Government to destroy this cocaine.

It soon became evident that the Government, by itself, did not appear to have the capability to destroy such a large quantity of narcotics. By admission of senior Government functionaries, the US authorities made an offer to airlift the cocaine to special facilities they had in Miami, established for the purpose of destroying narcotics.

For some reason or the other the Government dithered and allowed an opportunity for rumours to fly around, one of the most disturbing of which was that the stock had started to diminish. Whether that is so or not, I am not saying. The point I am making is that the dithering created an opportunity for rumours which did not redound to the credit either of the Government or the law enforcement agencies.

Mr. Speaker, this morning the matter took a dramatic and startling turn. I have been reliably informed that in the wee hours of the morning the cocaine was moved by barges and dumped in the Atlantic Ocean. The operation was supported by the Venezuelan military. A flight of OV10 Bronco fighter aircraft and Canberra bombers provided air cover and Brazilian destroyer class warships kept watch in the ocean.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, a Venezuelan military authority was positioned in the operation room of the GDF where the coordination of this exercise was taking place.

These in themselves raised disturbing issues, the first of which has to do with the clandestine and furtive way in which the Government has acted in this manner and the great lengths to which it went to deceive the public.

Questions were raised by journalists about how the Government was going to dispose of –

**[The Minister of Agriculture and Parliamentary Affairs (Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud):** I think the Hon. Member is quite aware of the Standing Orders and the necessary concomitant –]

**Mr. Hoyte:** You don't need to tell me that. I am aware of that.

**[Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud:** What the Hon. Member must do is request leave to move the adjournment of the Assembly and, if allowed, the matter will be debated.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Right. Well I asked for leave and the Hon. Speaker called upon me to proceed.

**[Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud:** I have a right to raise it.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** You have a right and I have a right to reply to you.

**[Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud:** I have a right and I will utilise that right with all the strength at my command. If I feel the Standing Orders make provision and it is being breached and in my own humble opinion – ]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Well that's a matter for you and the Speaker.

**[Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud:** So I am saying that the Hon. Member is entitled to raise it, he is entitled to debate it, but please, he is engaging in a debate before the adjournment. He must only seek permission.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** That is for the Speaker, not for me.

**[Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud:** You are probably right.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, am I right in assuming I have your leave?

**[The Deputy Speaker:** Yes.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Precisely, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, the first question has to do with the clandestine and furtive manner, the Government cannot deny that it has been.

**[The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Hoyte, I am allowing you the Motion but we are not ready for the debate.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** You are not ready for it?

**[The Deputy Speaker:** According to the Standing Orders we will be ready at half past four.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** All right.

**[The Deputy Speaker:** I respectfully ask that you do not start speaking on the Motion.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** All right, as Your Honour rules in accordance with the Standing Orders.

**[The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, I allowed the matter to be raised. It is, however, necessary for this Assembly to give leave. I therefore put the question.]

**[Question put and agreed to.]**

**[The Deputy Speaker:** The Motion will therefore be debated at 16.30 hours.]

## **Motion for the Adjournment of the Assembly on a Definite Matter of Urgent Public Importance - Dumping of Cocaine in the Atlantic Ocean: 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1998**

[**The Deputy Speaker:** The Hon. Member, Mr. Desmond Hoyte.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, I sought leave to raise this matter as one of urgent public importance because of the extraordinary circumstances related to it.

It is well known that on the 21<sup>st</sup> October, the law enforcement agencies uncovered a large cache of cocaine aboard a vessel that was moored in the Demerara Harbour. The captain of the vessel pleaded guilty and was imprisoned and the cocaine was ordered to be destroyed.

It became very clear that the Guyanese Authorities did not seem to have the capability to destroy this large quantity of cocaine, which was said to be about 2.6 tons. Members of the media made enquiries of senior Government functionaries as to what the Government intended to do. In the meantime, Government officials admitted that the US authorities which had been involved in the actual uncovering of this cocaine, had offered to airlift the cocaine to Miami where they had special facilities for destroying narcotics. As the Government dithered and talked about exploring other options, rumours began to fly far and wide. As I have said, one of them was that the cocaine was beginning to disappear.

This morning however, the matter took a dramatic and startling turn. In the early hours of the morning barges transported the cocaine and dumped it into the Atlantic Ocean. Originally the intention was to dump this cocaine ten to twelve miles from the Lighthouse. I gather that the people reached that point and started to dump the cocaine. Many of them became sea sick and then they came nearer to the coast and dumped it four miles from the Lighthouse, very much within our economic zone where fishermen carry out their tasks of fishing.

I am reliably informed that Venezuelan military authorities were involved in this exercise. In fact, Mr. Speaker, a flight of OV-10 Bronco fighters and Canberra Bombers provided air cover. Venezuelan destroyer class vessels, warships, kept watch in the ocean.

At a press interview today, the Hon. Member, Mr. Sam Hinds, admitted that the Government had alerted the Venezuelan authorities to the fact that it was going to dump this cocaine, and asked the Venezuelan authorities whether, in the normal course of their patrols, they could keep an eye out for anybody who might be coming to do some mischief. So at least he is getting closer and closer to the position which I understand reliably, in fact, obtained.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that a Venezuelan military person was in the GDF operation room, where the coordination of this exercise took place.

Mr. Speaker serious questions have arisen about this matter. The first has to do with the furtive and clandestine matter in which the Government has approached this whole issue. The second has to do with the fact that, because of the sensitive relations with Venezuela, the Government seems to have been extremely ham-fisted in involving Venezuelan military authorities, and seeking, Mr. Speaker, to suppress this fact.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, there is the question of pollution. To dump such a large quantity of narcotics four miles from our coast where ten miles was originally planned, is an act of gross irresponsibility. The Government had a duty to find out what was going to be the effect of dumping that narcotics on the stock of fish and on the possible contamination of the fish which provides the food supplies of many people in this country, therefore, it has to be condemned as an act of irresponsibility and a dereliction of duty to the people of this country.

In all of these circumstances, Mr. Speaker, I think that the people of this country are entitled to a firm, clear and unequivocal explanation from the Government.

## Second and Third Readings of the Rice Factories Bill 1998 - Ruling on Unnecessary Division: 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1998

**[The Chairman:** Hon. Member, the Appendix in May's page 991, Section 39 has been brought to my attention. May I read it? Division unnecessarily claimed –

*“The Speaker or the Chairman, may after the lapse of two minutes, if in his opinion the Division is unnecessarily claimed, take the vote of the House or the Committee by calling upon the Members successively to rise in their places, and he shall thereupon as he thinks fit, either declare the determination of the House or Committee...”*

Before this was given to me, I would have called on Mr. Hoyte with his experience, but above all, because he knows better. This is rather futile. Sir, I say this with the greatest of respect. I therefore ask that we do it properly, rather than rely on May's where you stand and say. Let's go on.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, I do not accept your criticism that this is futile. We need to bring the Government benches to a realisation that these debates must be conducted properly. They cannot waste our time by indulging –

**[Interruption]**

**[The Chairman:** Order please!]

**Mr. Hoyte:** - in abuse and irrelevancies and calling it 'debate'. That is what has happened here. I noticed that the Hon. Member Mr. Fazil Ali went on to great length and you did not on one occasion refer to the rule which gives Members a limited time beyond which they cannot go unless the House approves. With due respect to you and what you have read in May's I say two things: one is, it says after a lapse of two minutes. We are not lapsing. From the time the vote is taken, the oral vote, we call for a division – there is no lapse.

Secondly, I do not think that May's can overrule this specific Standing Order which we have here. So, unless the Clerk, or whoever is proposing this procedure, can show that the House of Commons has a rule in as specific terms as we have, then that does not apply.

**[The Chairman:** Are you then saying, Sir, that we continue?]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I asked the Hon. Member, Mr. Hinds, to go outside there and let's talk, so that he can understand our concerns, but he didn't take up my offer. So we can go alone, if you rule –

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** How can you decide what is necessary and what is unnecessary, in terms of the tactics and strategies and the concerns of the People's National Congress? You can't do that. It is for us to decide that.

**[The Chairman:** Order, please! Order! May I say this to the entire Assembly, Sir: This is a country no bigger than a house. Our roots are here. We have to live in it and we have to live now and, in my humble opinion, I think this is unnecessary and it is not worth it. I am appealing to you.]

**[Interruption by Mr. Hoyte]**

**[The Chairman:** I am still speaking to you. I am appealing to you that we stop it. Let us stop it. You know better -]

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** What are we doing? It is an exercise in futility. Well, the Hon. Minister read to you what our Rule says. No one called and tried to say anything to you. Nobody appealed here or there and said "*This must stop.*" Nothing like that.

Our Whip called for a Division, and I am saying that unless the Hon. Member, or whoever is proposing some kind of closure on this, can show that the House of Commons has a similar rule I am saying that May's does not apply. May's applies as the Hon. Member, Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud said, if there is a lack of clarity in a certain matter, but there is none here.

**[The Chairman:** Are you still saying, Sir, that we must go clause by clause?]

**[Hon. Member (PNC):** Yes.]

**[The Chairman:** I am speaking to Mr. Hoyte, please.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I am saying, Mr. Chairman, that I made an offer to the Hon. Member, Mr. Hinds, for us to go out and discuss this matter. He didn't take it up. I am repeating that offer now to Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud; in that case let us continue now.

**[The Chairman:** Mr. Hoyte, I am speaking to you now, in my capacity as Chairman here, Sir.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Yes. And I am speaking to you, Mr. Chairman.

**[The Chairman:** I am not speaking with other Members.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** All right.

**[The Chairman:** I am speaking to you in my capacity as Chairman – ]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I am explaining to you, Mr. Chairman –

**[The Chairman:** I heard you, Sir.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** – What is my position?

**[The Chairman:** That is why I called upon you.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I am saying that this matter could be resolved if we were to meet so that we could understand our real concerns. Now, if they don't want to do that, well, then, we have a stalemate and you can do what you like, Mr. Chairman, according to what you like and we will do what we like in terms of our approach to this House. It is not going to be in the best interest of the evolution of this Parliament here.

**[The Chairman:** Well, let me do this, Sir. Let me put from 6 to 16. We are at 5. Will you take that then?]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, if you are going to abridge our rights we could go home. There is no problem, we can go home.

**[The Chairman:** Let clause 6 stand part of the Bill.

Before I put clause 11, Mr. Hoyte, I would like to say to you, Sir, with the greatest of respect that it is very, very sad to know that at this time you can behave like this.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** If we can't talk, we can't arrive at agreement or consensus.

## Questions to Ministers - Report of Sea Defence Breach at Mon Repos: 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1998

The following question was submitted by Mr. H. Desmond Hoyte:

*“Would the Minister of Transport and Hydraulics say why the Government has not laid in the National Assembly, the Report of the Commission established under the Commissions of Inquiry Act, Chapter 19:0, into the sea defence breach at Mon Repos, which was handed over to the Government in January, 1997?”*

**[The Speaker:** Hon. Members, I think the answer to the question will now be circulated.]

**[The Minister of Transport and Hydraulics (Hon. C. Anthony Xavier)** submitted the following reply which was circulated:

*“The Report of the Commission of Inquiry was released publicly at a press conference held by the Head of the Presidential Secretariat which I attended.*

*There does not appear to be any specific provision in the Commissions of Inquiry Act, Chapter, 19:03, which requires the Report to be laid in the National Assembly.*

*Government is, however, pleased to accommodate the implied request by Mr. Hoyte and takes this opportunity to indicate that the Report will be laid in the National Assembly at the earliest possible opportunity.”]*

## **Requests for Leave to move Motion on the Adjournment of the Assembly on Matters of Urgent Public Importance - Reinstatement of Mr. Clarence Chue as Comptroller of Customs and Excise: 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1998**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, I have sent you a letter which sets out the request. I ask for the leave.

[**The Speaker:** Yes, Hon. Member, under Standing Order 11, a Member may ask for leave to move the adjournment of the Assembly to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance. The matter must therefore *inter alia* be a definite matter and also urgent.

Hon. Member, your application has raised several alleged transgressions of the Government which have and I quote from your application:

*“Culminated in the failure on the part of the Authorities to reinstate Mr. Clarence Chue pursuant to an order of the High Court.”*

Under Order 11, the matter must be a single specific matter. You have raised several matters which are also recent occurrences. As you are aware the matter must be a recent occurrence and also raised without delay

In view of that, Hon. Member, the application as worded in my view is not qualified. I am, however, prepared, in view of there being several matters being raised and one of the matters raised is the matter dealing with Mr. Clarence Chue, to grant you leave if you are prepared to deal with that aspect of the matter as your Motion.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the question I raised was the question of dangerous tensions in our society today arising from several causes.

[**The Speaker:** Yes, well Hon. Member –]

**Mr. Hoyte:** But you have ruled, I don't want to enter into a disputation with you. I accept your approach to this matter. Thank you, Sir.

[**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, since I have granted leave to the Hon. Member to deal with the matter relating to Mr. Clarence Chue's reinstatement of the Motion to be debated, the next question is that under Order 11, rule (3): do we have the leave of the Assembly that matter should be debated?]

[**Question put, and agreed to. ]**

**[The Speaker:** The matter will then stand adjourned to be debated at 4.30 p.m.]

## **Motion on the Denunciation of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1998**

*“WHEREAS the Government of Guyana became a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on 15 February, 1977;*

*AND WHEREAS Guyana acceded to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on 10 May, 1993, thereby allowing individuals who claim to be victims of violations of the rights set forth in the Covenant to approach the Human Rights Committee which was set up under Article 28 of the Covenant;*

*AND WHEREAS the Government of Guyana is becoming increasingly concerned over the abuse of procedures provided for under the Optional Protocol persons condemned to death after due legal process and whose sentences have been upheld by the Guyana Court of Appeal ;*

*AND WHEREAS the Government of Guyana is committed to the protection of the rights and freedoms of all persons included those whose lives are threatened by persons who commit heinous crimes for which death penalty is the only punishment;*

*AND WHEREAS it is Guyana’s intention to continue to afford all persons the right to recourse to the Committee on Human Rights should they consider that their rights have been violated;*

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:**

*That this National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana approve the denunciation of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in accordance with Article 12 thereof and Guyana’s simultaneous re-accession thereof with the following Reservation:*

*While the Government of Guyana recognizes the competence of the Human Rights Committee under Article 41 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 1 of the Optional Protocol thereto, it reserves the right in accordance with its Constitution, and other Laws of Guyana, to carry out capital punishment on any person duly convicted of crimes for which the death penalty is imposed. The Government of Guyana therefore does not recognize the competence of the Human Rights Committee to consider any communication relating to any prisoner under its jurisdiction who is under sentence of death after due legal process in respect of any matter relating to his detention, prosecution, conviction, sentence and the execution thereof and/or any matter connected therewith.*

*The Government of Guyana wishes to stress that its Reservation to the Optional Protocol in no way detracts from its obligations under the Covenant including its undertaking to respect and ensure to all individuals within its territory and subjects to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the Covenant as set out in Article 2 thereof, as well as its undertaking to report to the Human Rights Committee under the monitoring mechanism established by Article 40 thereof. ”*

**[The Minister of Foreign Affairs]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, this Motion is the product of confused and muddled thinking and I am sorry to see that the Hon. Member, Mr. Nadir, should have become entrapped in a confusion of thought. It is the first time that I have found him really to be irrelevant to the issue in hand.

The Motion springs from fallacious premises. It shows a total misapprehension of the object and purposes of the international Convention on Civil and Political Rights and the Protocol, and it reflects in a very disturbing way, Mr. Speaker, the poverty of intellect available to the Government and the paucity of professional and matured talent which should be at the disposal of the Government. One cannot help thinking that in a special sense it reflects the unwillingness of the Government to accept what it perceives quite erroneously to be a defect in the case of Yasseen and Thomas. It is not a defeat at all but I suspect that the Government sees it as such.

Mr. Speaker, we have been treated to a discourse on the crime rate, the nature of heinous crimes in our society, but those things are irrelevant to the issue because crime is a matter for policing and what we are discussing here today is an effort to deprive the citizen of a right under a treaty signed by the Government to have recourse to a court of last resort. And really there is no justification for depriving the citizen of this right because it was the Government itself, when acceding to the Protocol, that boasted that it was opening up new dimensions of democracy and human rights for the people of this country. So it is passing strange that such a short time after acceding to the Protocol the Government should now come to the Assembly in an effort to enter reservations on a very important part of the Treaty.

What is very disturbing is, in a sense, the sloppiness of the Government's presentation of its reason for bringing this Motion. That reason was set out in a GIS Release to which I shall advert in a moment because the matter is so unacceptable in the sense that the Government Agency for informing the people of this country about Governmental action or proposed action, should have so grossly misled citizens of the Republic.

Now, in this press release, Mr. Speaker, setting out the rationale for the bringing of this Motion, it was said that the National Assembly would be asked to denounce the international forum which is against the death penalty.

Now, I presume that by 'international forum' the crafters of this document meant the United Nations Human Rights Committee established under Part 4 of the Covenant. But there is nothing in the Covenant or the Protocol which is against the death penalty in any State party to the Protocol.

The press release then goes on to reinforce this misconception and misinformation by referring to the fact that when this Protocol -

[**Hon. Member:** What is the date?]

**Mr. Hoyte:** - the 10<sup>th</sup> of this month – when the Optional Protocol deletes the clauses against the death penalty, Guyana would be willing to re-join. I shall return to these matters a little later on.

Now, this Motion, if you look at it, in a way continues this misunderstanding for it says that Guyana reserves the right, in accordance with the Constitution and other laws of Guyana to carry out capital punishment. But Guyana always had the right because under Article 6 (2) of the Covenant, a right of a State party to the Covenant and the Protocol is preserved.

So there is nothing at all in either the Covenant or the Protocol which says that a State cannot impose capital punishment.

Now what is the nature of the Protocol? The Protocol enables a citizen who complains that his civil or political rights have been violated to have recourse to the Committee, but only after he has exhausted all domestic remedies. So that when the Government acceded to the Covenant and the Protocol it understood this. It understood that after the person had gone to the Court of Appeal, which is our final Court, he still had a right under this Treaty to go to the United Nations Committee on Human Rights.

It is, therefore, difficult to understand how the Government can come now and say: "*We don't want that to happen*", on the basis of a single application. It is not that we have had a succession of applications which have caused the Government, rightly or wrongly, to become worried. So when in the Motion the Government says that it is concerned about the abuse of the procedures, I think that what we have there is an abuse of the English Language.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the Government has talked about deleting the section in the Protocol referring to the death penalty. I pointed out that there is no such provision in the Protocol but even if the Government wanted to amend the Protocol, that would be fraught with difficulties because it cannot be done unilaterally. Under Article 11 of the Protocol such as to be approved finally by the United Nations General Assembly, and that is after a special conference has been called to consider any request for an amendment.

So let us now look at the terms of this Motion. It calls, first of all, for a denunciation of the Protocol, and that is possible. The Protocol makes provision for it to be denounced by a State party to it. But it goes on to say that on denunciation Guyana wants to re-accede with certain reservations which would effectively deprive a person convicted of capital offence from petitioning the Human Rights Commission. It would be no question of abuse.

The Motion talks about abuse of the procedure. I have contended that a single application could not constitute an abuse. But more than that, Mr.

Speaker, under Article 3 of the Protocol there is provision for the Committee itself to deal with abuses. The Article says that:

*“...the Committee shall consider inadmissible any communication under the present Protocol which it considers to be an abuse of the right of submission of such communication...”*

So there is built into the Protocol itself a provision for dealing with any attempt to abuse its procedures.

As I have said, Mr. Speaker, there is a right to denounce, but the proposal to re-accede simultaneously, is novel and a little bizarre.

There is no expressed provision in the Protocol for a reservation and since there is no expressed provision for a reservation one has to fall back on the principles of international law and specifically that Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, Article 19. Now here we have a number of hurdles because Article 19 makes it clear that reservation is not automatic. There are three possibilities. If at the time you accede or approve of the Treaty you have a reservation which is not prohibited by the Treaty.

If the Treaty has certain exclusions, you cannot bring those exclusions into the Treaty by way of reservation, and thirdly, Mr. Speaker, this is perhaps the most relevant one in our circumstances – no reservation will be accepted if it is incompatible with the object and purpose of the Treaty. That is a major hurdle and I want to submit, Mr. Speaker, that what the Government is trying to do in depriving a citizen on death row of making this final appeal to the United Nations Human Rights Commission is contrary to the spirit and intent, and the object and purpose of the Treaty. You can denounce, as Jamaica has done and Trinidad has done. *“We denounce the Treaty. We have no more part of it. That’s an end to it.”* But when you are talking about re-acceding and having a reservation you are going to have serious hurdles to jump.

Mr. Speaker, how does the Government know that any reservation will not be objected to. The State party to the Treaty and the Protocol have a right to object and, indeed, they have 12 months within which that objection can be launched. More than that, Mr. Speaker, a denunciation takes effect three months from the date it is notified to the Secretary-General, which is the depository of the Treaty. So it is difficult to comprehend what the Government means or the honourable mover of this Motion means when he says, he is going to denounce and simultaneously re-accede. You cannot do that.

There has been some talk, Mr. Speaker, of Pratt and Morgan and the cases that went to the Privy Council. In a sense they are irrelevant to the judicial circumstances of Guyana. The Privy Council is not the final Court of Appeal for Guyana. Our final Court of Appeal is our Court of Appeal and it is not bound by any decision of the Privy Council and in any case,

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in our laws which imposes upon this Government the limitation which has formed the basis of Pratt and Morgan and the other cases which went from the jurisdictions of CARICOM to the Privy Council.

In those circumstances, Mr. Speaker, we cannot support his Motion. In fact, we will recommend that this Motion be withdrawn and the Government give itself time to study the implications. We would suggest that an approach be made to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to find out whether this reservation flies in the face of Article 19 which I have quoted, whether it is incompatible, as I verily believe, with the object and purpose of the Treaty, because if we proceed we might well find ourselves the objects of ridicule and contempt within the region and within the United Nations corridors.

So we do not support this Motion. We think it is prudent for the Government to pause and reflect and get mature professional advice on what it is trying to do. We believe that, as a matter of principle, we cannot support it because we feel that the Government having acceded to the Covenant and the Protocol, the people of this country should have the right to all the benefits that flow from such accession.

The Motion is misconceived. Guyana cannot denounce and re-accede simultaneously as this Motion requests and if we pass this Motion we will be indulging in an exercise in futility which will make us the laughing stock of lawyers.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that a reservation could be objected to by a State party to the Treaty and we have no guarantee that such objection would not be lodged.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot support this Motion; we will not support this Motion as it stands.

**Motion on the Adjournment of the Assembly on  
Definite Matter of Urgent Importance -  
Reinstatement of Mr. Clarence Chue as  
Comptroller of Customs and Excise:  
16<sup>th</sup> November, 1998**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, over the past week, there were several incidents in the City which led to dangerous tensions affecting stability and good order.

These tensions arose from very many sources, one of which was the Clarence Chue affair. It is well known that Mr. Clarence Chue has been fighting a battle with the Government since 1993 when he was first interdicted, quite unlawfully, from duty. I do not intend to trace the whole saga of Mr. Chue's ordeal except to say that at the end of it all, many applications to the Court, many rulings by the Court, a judge of the High Court directed that Mr. Chue was the Comptroller of Customs and Excise and that he should be reinstated.

That reinstatement was not done by the competent Authorities and this led to much agitation, not only within the ranks of the Public Service and their union but among the general public. Last Friday, the union attempted to reinstate Mr. Chue physically. Self-help — that's what it is called in law. The following working day Customs Officers found themselves locked out and I understand, Mr. Speaker, that they were locked out again today.

Now, the incident attracted public attention. Crowds gathered. I understand that today there was a tear-smoke incident but the police, I am told, alleged that they did not fire the tear-smoke canister and that it came from a member of the crowd. I don't know how to take that or what the facts behind it are. The point I am seeking to make is that this incident, the Chue affair, has generated to a point where there is jeopardy to stability and good order.

I cannot understand, Mr. Speaker, how it comes about that a court order is not promptly obeyed. When a situation like that arises, I think we are justified in describing it as executive lawlessness. We have seen many examples of this phenomenon of executive lawlessness — snide attacks, crude attacks sometimes on the judiciary. We have seen a situation in which there is a misuse of the police to deal with what are social problems. We have seen this in the incident at Non Pariel, we have seen it at Belfield. So more and more we are finding that there are tensions in the society arising from a variety of cases of which, as I have said, the Clarence Chue incident is merely one.

While all of this is happening the incidence of violent crimes is arising. I, myself, don't understand the reports coming from certain quarters that

the crime rate is falling. I do not believe it, and do not think that the average citizen believes it. But that is not important. What is important is that the society is being afflicted by violent crime and there is a marked inability on the part of the police to contain it, through no fault I submit, of the police themselves. I think the police are overstretched, they are not adequately equipped. We have all manner of problems arising from failure to adequately put the police in a position to carry out their duties. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that the unsettling situation brought about by what I would describe as a failure of the Inter-Party dialogue envisaged by the Hermandston Accord to achieve concrete results is a matter of deep concern to the average citizen.

In this situation of a perception of executive lawlessness, rising crime, rising unemployment, escalating cost of living, homelessness – because now you are seeing not only street children, but street families in this situation – I feel that there is great need for the Government to pause and to analyse this situation and to recognise that we would well be sitting on a powder keg which could be ignited by a very simple act of indiscretion on the part of somebody in authority. I felt that the matter is grave and I should bring it to the attention of this Honourable House.

## Motion of Sympathy on the Death of Mr. Martin Wylde Carter, O.R.: 17<sup>th</sup> December, 1998

*“Be it Resolved:*

*That this National Assembly record its deep regret at the death of Mr. Martin Wylde Carter, O.R., and pay tribute to the dedicated and distinguished service which he rendered to Guyana and to its Parliament.*

*And be it Further Resolved:*

*That this Assembly direct that an expression of its sympathy be conveyed to his bereaved family and relatives.”*

**[The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, I suppose that most people in thinking about Martin Carter focused on his poetry upon which his fame and reputation rested, and rightly so, because his poetry reflects his life and embedded in the poetry are the characteristics of those values which he loved and cherished. I have heard many people refer to him as a poet of resistance, I have no doubt that they are taking their cue from the title of one of his volumes. Some call him a Poet of Protest.

I do believe that to simplify Martin Carter with that kind of categorisation is really to miss the point entirely, because Martin Carter’s poetry was a passionate expression of his love, the things that mattered to him, the things that he loved, freedom, human dignity, ordinary people, nature, the human condition and life itself. These were things that he cared about and these are the things that he wrote about and even when his expressions were marked by a savage indignation, it was really a condemnation of the things which were opposite to the things that he loved.

Martin Carter was an ordinary person, distinguished from the rest of us by his genius. I suppose that a young student today and a young student certainly tomorrow, in trying to come to terms with his poetry might envisage him as a man who lived in an ivory tower grappling with esoteric thoughts, with abstract ideas and so on, but that is not Martin Carter at all.

Martin loved life and lived life fully. He could banter with the boys, he could joke, he could gossip, he could drink with them and, in the end, he was extremely human and humane but the paradox is this: even though there was the extrovert side of Martin, there was also an inner life which perhaps embraced his genius.

He was subject to all the frailties of the ordinary human being but he does not need our absolution, for what Douglas Auden said of W.B. Yates in his memory of Yates:

*“Time that is intolerant of the brace and innocent and indifferent to the weak and to a beautiful physique was his language, and it forgives everyone by whom it lives,*

*pardons, cowardice, conceit, laced it honours at their feet, time that with this strange excuse pardons Kipling and his views and will pardon all Claudell...*"

- will certainly pardon Martin for writing well.

Martin had a dry sense of humour and I can imagine him now in an expansive mood with a laughter that was a chuckle. I can see him indulging in his dry humour but never malicious, always humane and always thoughtful. After he returned from a mission to the United Nations where he was part of the Guyanese team to the General Assembly, he met me on the road and he said: "You know Desmond, I made a great discovery." I said: "What is that?" He said: "This world is run by human beings." What he meant by that was that whether you went to the United Nations or whether it was a meeting of a Friendly Burial Society or a sports club, the same kind of people, ordinary human beings, were stupid and wise in turn, were humane and brutal in turn, were just ordinary people and there was really no distinction between the man who would consider himself as having no particular office and the person who held some high office.

Martin detested hypocrisy, he detested acts that were oppressive, he detested pretentiousness and bumptiousness. The bond between Martin and myself did not arise from any intellectual discourse or any discussion about poetry or anything like that. It resulted from the time when both of us were in the Cabinet and we used to pass little notes to each other about persons who appeared there, who were full of pretentiousness and bumptiousness and arrogance. That led to a life-long relationship in which we had private jokes. Every time we met we would exchange these private jokes which persons around never understood.

Mr. Speaker, when one reads Martin's poetry today, those of us who were of his time and his generation, we get a feeling of immediacy. We feel that he is still around and after you have read, then reality descends. We empathised with John E. Stubbs, what he wrote for his friend and fellow poet Sydney Keays when Sidney Keays died he had gone:

*"Where no hollowed voice or becoming hand will ever lure him back and what is ours of him must speak impartially for all the world. There is no personal work remains for one and I pretended to find no meaning here. I thought I may guess a singer's wisdom who says to death a dark immaculate flower and tenderness in every fallen autumn, such abstract music may not bring again my friend to warm his robe. Inscrutable, the darkness covers him."*

But the darkness can never cover the light and the glory which were Martin Carter's and the fulgent brilliance which manifested itself in the body of poetry which is our legacy. But Martin does not need our tributes. He was his own monument, he was his own unity and is yet elected to linger here as a man and myth.

In supporting this Motion, Mr. Speaker, I extend sincere condolence to his wife, Phyllis and to other members of his family.

# Motion on the Adoption of Report of Special Select Committee Re: Constitution Reform Commission: 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1999

*“Be It Resolved:*

*That the Report of the Special Committee appointed to determine the terms of reference and composition of the Constitution Reform Commission be adopted.”*

**[The Minister of Agriculture and Parliamentary Affairs]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to intervene in this debate, but I think that it is incumbent on me to make a few remarks. We have had a lot of rhetoric. This debate had been long on rhetoric, but short on realities.

We need to remind ourselves of the background to the circumstances which have led us to today's meeting and today's agenda. Yes, it has to do with something - with protests on the streets. It has arisen out of a situation where people have had a number of grievances having to do with fairness of elections, grievance having to do with unfairness in governance, grievance having to do with bad economic and social conditions. All of these grievances contributed to mass protest in the streets. These protests are still a danger to the society, and there is no point in us hiding our heads in the sand and pretending that these things are not so.

The Hon. Minister, Mr. Nagamootoo, spent a lot of time stressing on who won the election, but I would remind him that that issue is still at large, and is still the subject of a petition in our courts, so that we cannot proceed on the basis that there is a widespread acceptance of who has won and who has lost the elections. What I am trying to do is to prevent us from being overwhelmed by a false sense of euphoria.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what I want to say is this: there are serious problems in our country. I don't want to go through them at great length. We believe that the constitution gives us an opportunity, not to correct the problems, but to reduce those problems and provide a way of dealing with issues and difficulties when they arise.

What we have to do now, Mr. Speaker, is not to waste our time with flowery language. We can all do that. It takes a little time to sit down and craft a speech and pick up some speech by Martin Luther King or some other person, or talk about autochthonous. I am sure the Hon. Member cannot spell the word. But in the final analysis, Mr. Speaker, I want the Hon. Member to understand what I am saying - we supporting this Bill and we are not saying that it is useless. We are saying that we need to proceed with the implementation of this Motion and everything that surrounds it with a sense of reality, remembering how we got to this stage and remembering what we expect of a new Constitution for our country.

That is all I want to say, Mr. Speaker, so that we don't leave this House believing that by passing this Motion we have solved all problems.

## Motion on the Jurisdiction of the Attorney-General: 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1999

*“Whereas under our Constitution of Guyana the Attorney-General has no jurisdiction whatsoever in criminal matters,*

*And whereas under the said Constitution of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is autonomous and insulated from political directional*

*And whereas on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of June, 1998, the Attorney-General wrongly and unlawfully directed the Deputy Solicitor-General to prepare a Notice of Appeal in relation to a matter arising out of a criminal case heard by a magistrate in the Georgetown judicial district;*

*And whereas the Attorney-General improperly and unlawfully directed the Acting Director of Public Prosecutions to sign the said Notice of Appeal;*

**BE IT RESOLVED:**

*That this National Assembly rebukes the Attorney-General to:*

*(a) unlawfully interfering in a matter which he had no jurisdiction and to which he was not a part, and*

*(b) giving unlawfully directions to the Acting Director of Public Prosecutions.*

**[Mr. H. Desmond Hoyte]**

**[The Speaker:** The Hon. Member, Mr. Hoyte.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, this Motion is about a principle, not a personality. The principle is this, that when the Constitution prescribes the authority and the jurisdiction of a public functionary, then it is in the interest of the State and good order that that functionary should keep strictly within the limits of the prescription, otherwise good order in our society would be threatened and a state of anarchy would not be far off.

This Motion is about the transgression of that very wholesome principle. It involves the Office of the Attorney-General and Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Speaker, the Constitution, article 112, establishes the office of the Attorney-General of this country and prescribes that he shall be the principle legal officer of the Government of Guyana and Article 116 establishes the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Article 187 sets out the functions and the authority of the Director of Public Prosecutions and those articles make one thing clear. First of all, that, in criminal cases, the functionary who is vested with jurisdiction is the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Attorney-General has no *locus standi* in matters and causes criminal –

The Constitution expressly excluded the intervention by the Attorney-General. It draws a clear boundary between the two offices. In Article 187,

the Constitution makes it clear that the powers vested in the DPP shall be vested in him “to exclusion of any other person or authority” and it makes it very clear that in the exercise of his office he is not to be subjected to any external authority. In other words, what the Constitution was making very clear, was that the DPP should not in any way be subject to political influence, guidance or control. He is a different category of creature – I know many people don’t understand that word, but I hope you lawyers do – from the Attorney-General who is a political office-holder.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the matter which give rise to this Motion is the transgression of the role by the Attorney-General, who, I contend, trespassed on the domains of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and, if he did that, then of course, he would be acting unconstitutionally and this would not be a trivial matter because this House has a duty to uphold the provisions of the Constitution and to tell functionaries who happen to be Members of this House when they have transgressed. That is the sole purpose of this Motion – to show that there was a transgression and to ask the House to show its displeasure.

The issue, Mr. Speaker, had a very humble beginning. It started in a criminal case in the Magistrates’ Court, *Police v. Edwards* 1998 No. 62M. The matters of that case do not really concern us. They are unimportant, but on the conclusion of the criminal matter, *Police v. Edwards*, the Magistrate made an order under Section 69 of the Police Act, that a quantity of gold, 217 ounces, that had formed the subject matter of the criminal charge, should be returned to a man named Sheik Ali. Sheik Ali had claimed the gold. There was no other claimant, and the Magistrate determined that the goods were not *bona fide* and that the gold belonged to Sheik Ali. It was at this stage, Mr. Speaker, that the matter took very surprising turns and twists.

The police, for reasons best know to themselves, refused or neglected to obey the Magistrate’s order and return the gold. Ali moved to the High Court for an order *mandamus* to compel the Commissioner of Police and his agents to comply with the Magistrate’s order, and on the 30<sup>th</sup> June an order *nisi* was made, subsequently made absolute, requiring the Commissioner of Police to show cause why the order should not issue. In the course of time the order was made absolute and it was at this stage that the Attorney-General seems to have misdirected himself completely. He directed the Solicitor-General, acting, to prepare a motion of *certiorari*, prohibition or, preferably, he said, a Notice of Appeal in relation to the disposal of the gold. But he urged speed because the matter had to be filed, he said, on the 30<sup>th</sup> June. That Notice was prepared, a Notice of Appeal in the end, in the Chambers of the Attorney-General, and on that date, that is, the 30<sup>th</sup> June, the Attorney-General sent a note to the Acting DPP which read as follows:

*“DPP (acting) Yonette:”*

- that was a reference to Miss Yonette Cummings, who was acting DPP.

*“For your signature and filing in Magistrate’s Court Office, Mr. Kishore – 1.7.98 is the latest date, service should be effected by registered post, Mr. Bart can assist.*

*Charles R. AG3.6.95”*

Charles R is royalty. It is open to every person to decide what quality of person he is.

You will see there, Mr. Speaker, an unlawful and an unconstitutional act by the Attorney-General. These were orders that the Notice of Appeal be prepared and sent to the DPP acting to have that notice filed. The Notice was filed on that date and then there was some humorous developments, in that Appeal – and this is really not quite relevant. The Appeal was dismissed by the Full Court as being filed out of time and in any case the person who appeared as an Appellant had no *locus standi*. He was not involved in the case in the Magistrate’s Court, he was not a complainant. Nobody knows where he came from, but his name was inserted as an appellant. So this was all high comedy.

The Appeal was dismissed and the Attorney-General then got himself involved in a second act of unconstitutionality. He himself now intervened personally and filed a Notice of Appeal in the Appeal Court. Now, Mr. Speaker, I will show the unconstitutionality of this act in a moment.

So you have the Attorney-General of Guyana, Appellant. He emerged out of the blue – and filed an Appeal in the Court of Appeal. Now, in the meantime, the Order which the High Court Judge had made remained extant. Why did the learned Attorney-General again involve himself in unconstitutionality in the second act which he did?

Article 187 (5), makes it abundantly clear. This Article deals with the jurisdiction of the DPP, his functions, his powers and his authority. The article says:

*“For the purpose of this Article, any Appeal from any determination in any criminal proceedings before any Court ... to any other Court in Guyana shall be deemed to be part of those proceedings.”*

Let me emphasize the fact: any Appeal from any determination in a criminal matter shall be deemed to be part of the criminal proceedings. So that the order which the Magistrate made directing that the gold be returned to Sheik Ali, under Section 69 of the Police Act, was an order made in a criminal case or matter, and this is a matter from which the Attorney-General was completely excluded.

That may have gone above the heads of some people, so let me reiterate, and let me refer to the Constitution:

*“Any Appeal from any determination, in any criminal proceedings, before any court ... to any other court, shall be deemed to be part of those proceedings - shall be deemed to be part of the criminal proceedings.”*

Any determination of any matter, and there can be no doubt that the determination of the ownership of the gold was part and parcel of the criminal proceedings. Those were matters in which the Director of Public Prosecutions would have complete control and jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, there are two limbs upon which I argue before this Honourable House; that the Hon. Attorney-General misled himself, misdirected himself – those are the most charitable terms I would use, I would not want to use any other – on two issues.

First of all, in directing the DPP, by sending her the notice of appeal. In other words, telling her to *“File this appeal”*. That was wrong. His business was to keep himself as far as possible from this case.

And, secondly, when he intervened in a criminal matter, trying to upset a determination of a magistrate’s court, when the Constitution at 187(5) says:

*“That any appeal from any determination in any criminal proceedings is part of the criminal proceedings.”*

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I would ask this House to take note of the breaches of due constitutionality by the Attorney-General, to uphold the provisions of the Constitution, to send a signal to this country that this House is concerned about due constitutionality, that this House is concerned that all functionaries exercising jurisdiction under the Constitution should act strictly in accordance with the powers and the authority vested in them, should not transgress or exceed them, because that is the way to social and political disorder.

Mr. Speaker, I have laid the facts before the Honourable House, and I ask that this Motion be entertained and carried.

**[The Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Motion needs a seconder before we can put it.]

**[Mr. Dunstan Barrow:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the Motion.]

**[Question proposed.]**

**[The Speaker:** Does the Hon. Member, Mr. Hoyte wish to reply.]

**Mr. Hoyte (Replying):** Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, in law we have a saying that equity looked upon that as done which ought to have been done. The learned Attorney-General was supposed to reply to my Motion. I don’t

think he has done that but we have to invoke the maxim of equity. His reply showed a remarkable degree of mental confusion and he seemed to be arguing, Mr. Speaker, an appeal from the learned Magistrate. We are not appealing from the Magistrate; that is not the issue. This issue is this: the Magistrate made an Order. Whether it is right or wrong is irrelevant, immaterial. Secondly, that Order was made in a criminal matter. It arose out of a criminal matter and the very fact that the DPP filed an appeal in the criminal jurisdiction at the behest of the Attorney-General gives a very clear idea that at all material time the learned Attorney-General knew that this was a criminal matter but misdirected himself. I say he did not advert his mind to where the limits of his jurisdiction stopped.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the Order, first of all the application made by the man, Ali, and signed by his counsel, he says that the quantity of gold came into the custody of the police in connection with a criminal charge and the learned Magistrate in making his order under Section 69, said, "*Raw gold which came into possession of the police on the 9<sup>th</sup> April in connection with a criminal charge.*" So how could my Learned Friend be arguing that this matter did not arise out of a criminal matter? How does he get behind the clear and unambiguous words of Article 187 (5) which pointed out that any determination at all, related to a criminal cause, falls within the criminal jurisdiction? Appeals fall within the ambit of criminal proceedings.

Mr. Speaker, those are the things I want to say. I just wanted to say that I was no acrimonious. I did not set out to impugn the character of the Hon. Attorney-General. Whether you thank me or not, I dealt with principles and, therefore, I would have expected that at least the Hon. Attorney-General would have dissected my argument and would have dealt with every argument that I put forward on the basis of the application of the law.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Regrettably, he failed to do that and I can draw my, and others can draw their, own conclusions as to the reason why.

**[Question put, and negatived.]**

**[The Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Motion has been defeated.]

## Motion on the Reconstitution of Public Service Appellate Tribunal: 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1999

*“Whereas the Public Service Appellate Tribunal Act of 1984 provides for the establishment of the Tribunal to enable aggrieved Public Servants to appeal against decisions which they consider to be wrong or unfair,*

*And Whereas the said Tribunal has not been constituted since August 24, 1995:*

*Be it Resolved:*

*That the National Assembly recommend that the Public Service Appellate Tribunal be reconstituted.”*

**[Mr. H. Desmond Hoyte]**

**[The Speaker:** Hon. Member, Mr. Hoyte, I understand that you wished to move the Motion for the reconstitution of the Public Service Appellate Tribunal. The Tribunal has been appointed since then. I don't know whether you will withdraw the Motion.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know the Tribunal has been appointed. In other words, the nominations have been made, the people have been appointed but there are no physical facilities for them, no staff. They haven't started to function and they can't function. I wonder whether the Hon. Minister will tell this House when we can look forward to this Appellate Tribunal beginning its work.

**[The Speaker:** Really, Hon. Member, I don't understand that the Motion deals with that.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the only way I could get to the matter is through an answer.

**[Laughter]**

**[The Speaker:** I could have just said that we can't really continue with the Motion having regard to the fact that you are asking about establishing the Tribunal which has been established. I take it that we will not proceed with it.]

**[Mr. H. Desmond Hoyte did not proceed with the Motion.]**

# Motion on the Second and Third Readings of the Deeds Registry Authority Bill 1998: 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1999

*"A Bill intituled:*

*An Act to establish the Deeds Registry as a body corporate; to promote the efficient and orderly operation of the Registry; to establish the conditions governing the employment of officers and employees of the Registry; to provide for funding of the operations of the Registry, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."*

**[The Attorney-General and Minister of Legal Affairs]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Abuse of power! That is one of the concerns of persons who have studied this thing.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** I'll return to that anon.

It is regrettable that a debate which was going so well should have taken a turn with the intervention of the Hon. Member, Mr. Judge.

Dawn Yearwood, Jameela Ally, Sonia Joseph, Timothy Jones, Mr. Thompson. Who are these people? The Hon. Minister asks. These are the people that the Attorney-General drove out of his Chambers and they sued him in a Court of Law.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** So, don't come here and say that the Attorney-General's Chambers were decimated by the People's National Congress. It has been despoiled by the current Attorney-General.

We, Mr. Speaker, look back on a distinguished line of Draftsmen under the People's National Congress -

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** - starting with Sonny Ramphal, coming right through to Dr. Shahabudeen, coming through to Ricardo Marques, coming through to Keith Massiah and other persons, including a distinguished Draftsman, whom you inherited and still have, in Mr. Cecil Dhurjon.

We had competent people who drafted our laws and we didn't have to go to Washington to get people to draft laws.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to identify with the comment made by the Hon. Member, Dr. Roopnarine, about the sloppiness of Bills and the late circulation of Amendments. I think that it needs to be realised that this is unacceptable in this House and it doesn't do anything to enhance the quality of the debate.

I do not wish to traverse the ground covered by the Hon. Members on this side of the House. I am particularly concerned about the provenance of this Bill. This Bill, if it has come out of the thinking of the Government, if it had formed part of their own strategy for the modernisation of the Public Service would, at least, have been understandable. But that is not so, Mr. Speaker, this Bill has been imposed on the Government and the Memorandum from Foley, Hoag and Elliot, to which my colleague, Mr. Trotman referred, makes the matter absolutely clear.

This Memorandum, Mr. Speaker, to the Hon. Charles Ramson, Attorney-General and Minister of Legal Affairs, dated September 21, 1998, sets out clearly what is the origin of this Bill. It says that the Government, in order to qualify for HIPC relief, undertook to introduce this Bill, so it is not a matter which came from the thinking of the Government.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** This document goes on to set out what is supposed to be the purpose of the Bill, institutional strengthening, modernisation.

Mr. Speaker, I think the point has been made that institutional strengthening and modernisation of the Deeds Registry did not necessarily need this cumbersome Bill which is before us. We are not going to get HIPC funds because we have not met the criteria. The Hon. Member, Mr. Fung-On, was on a television channel a few days ago making this point: That we are not going to get HIPC funds, so you might as well forget this Bill.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member, Mr. Jagdeo, said that a group of eminent lawyers went to the late President Jagan requesting him to delink the Deeds Registry from the Public Service. That is not true because I happen to know of that initiative, and I myself spoke with Dr. Jagan, at my request, on the concerns of the legal profession. They were talking about the Supreme Court Registry and, Mr. Speaker, the problem we have with this Deeds Registry Authority Bill is that we do not think that you can deal with the Deeds Registry in isolation from the Supreme Court Registry.

You delink the Deeds Registry; you give the people their better conditions of service, more money. What is going to happen to the people in the Supreme Court Registry? Are you saying by that, that the Registrar of Deeds is a more important person than the Supreme Court Registrar?

Are you saying that the functions of the Supreme Court Registry are less important than the functions of the Deeds Registry?

So, the point is not about enhancing the conditions of the service of people in the Deeds Registry. The point is about proceeding in a haphazard, piecemeal way with the reform of the Public Service.

Mr. Speaker, the Government comes to this House and says. "*We have a comprehensive plan for the reform and reorganisation of the Public Service.*" One couldn't argue with that principle, we might differ on methods, we might differ on approaches, but the principle would be one which we would all have to accept. But this Bill here, this Deeds Registry Authority Bill, does not emerge from any such comprehensive plan. It is dangling all by itself, and it is going to cause tremendous difficulties within the rest of the Public Service.

There are one or two rather worrying things about this Bill; I don't want to talk about the extraordinary powers of the Minister. I think they are inordinate. I do not agree with my learned Hon. Friend, Mr. Ramjattan, that there are checks and balances with respect to the Minister's power under this Bill. It is not so. But I am particularly concerned about what I deem to be an act of deception.

In the Washington Memo, the Washington lawyers pointed out that the Government had gone into trouble over the transfer of people from the Ministry of Finance to the Revenue Authority. The powers were not clear; the matter was in Court and so they have proposed a means of getting around this. They said: "*Transfer everybody with the approval of the Public Service Commission.*"

My learned and Hon. Friend, Mr. Trotman, pointed out the difficulties even in that. You transfer everybody, and when you transfer them, then you could decide whom you are going to dismiss. That is what the letter says. In other words, take them out from the protection of the Public Service Commission, take them into this new body where they do not have any constitutional protection and then weed out those whom you want to weed out. Now that is not the way that any honourable Government should be behaving. This disturbs me considerably.

Mr. Speaker, I do not buy this argument that you take the Deeds Registry out of the Public Service and then you decide to reorganise it. One would have thought that the reorganisation and the delinking from the Public Service would have gone in tandem.

There is nothing in this Bill which points to any reorganisation, any enhancement of efficiency. I do not accept the explanation by the Hon. Member, Mr. Jagdeo, that somewhere down the line, in the sweet bye and bye, they are going to do this reorganisation.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** That is the kind of argument put forward by some people in the religious field and I don't know that my Hon. Friend has yet decided to

get into the same field as his leader, Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud. It will take him a long time to get there. Reepu has been at this thing a long time.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, that concerns me a great deal. The HIPC incentives, so to speak, might be laudable. I have no doubt that the Government wants to garner as much resources as possible. It wants the external debts reduced, there is nothing wrong with those objectives but I think it is quite wrong merely, without argument, to accept anything that these external agencies come and say. There has to be some logic in what they are doing and there is no logic in this. Let us suppose that they had said instead of the Deeds Registry, pull out the Supreme Court Registry. They would have gone that way. Instead of the Deeds Registry, let us suppose they said "*All right, let us take the lands and Survey Department. Make it autonomous. Set it up*"

The point I am making is that you are proceeding in a haphazard and *ad hoc* way and that really is unsatisfactory. That is going to buy you more trouble than you intend to have, because people in other agencies, still in the Public Service, are not going to be happy. Already we have seen the eruption from the unions, we have already seen in the letters the way there are acting up and it is true -

[Interruption]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I don't write letters. They can't pay me to write letters.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** It is a human thing. If you tell me that if you shift my agency I am going to get money, I will say, "*Yes*". I will clap and applaud you and say that you are a great man, but that does not mean that the policy is a good one or the methodology is one which is going to bring you success.

I want to say something about the proposal to make the new body collector of its own revenues and so on.

In my many long years, in and around Government, I have heard this proposal many times. Every agency, which doesn't get the transfers from the Central Government which it wants, talks about how much revenue it generates and proposes that it should be made autonomous. There is a certain allure about that, a kind of simple logic which says, "*Yes, if the people are making money, let them keep their money and let them finance their own budget.*" But, Mr. Speaker, I am reminded of a maxim by the British philosopher, A. N. Whitehead who said, "*Seek simplicity and distrust it*". So it is not everything that looked like simple logic that we should go after.

Those are the remakes I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I don't want to traverse the ground of the other speakers but these points that I have made disturbed me very much. I am very uncertain about them, for those reasons and particularly because I do not think that there is any urgency about this matter, I do not think that we can support his Bill; there is a proposal that we send it to a Select Committee. Maybe that is one route. I myself would have preferred that the Bill be withdrawn and the Members of the Government take some time to ponder, to reflect to order their thoughts again before coming back to this Honourable House.

**[Applause]**

## **Request for Leave to Move the Adjournment of the Assembly On Definite Matters of Urgent Public Importance - Demolishing of Houses at Crane West Coast Demerara: 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1999**

[**The Speaker:** Hon. Member, I have received your application for leave to move the adjournment of the Assembly under Order 11.

Such an application must involve a matter which is definite, urgent and of public importance. The matter must be of recent occurrence and raised without delay. It is my view that facts should be set out in the application so that the Speaker can determine whether the application should be granted. For the matter to be recent occurrence, it is my view that the matter has already occurred or else how can it be determined whether it is of recent or not and what may be in the contemplation may not be what is carried out.

A mere speculation of what may be done will not enable an application to be qualified under the Standing Order. An application will also not qualify where the matter raised involved no more than the arbitrary administration of the law or where the matter raised was one for which a statutory authority is responsible or where the Motion imports an argument.

For the above reasons, I am not satisfied that the matter can be raised as a definite matter of public importance.

The following letter was received:

*"Dear Mr. Speaker*

*I hereby make application for leave to raise, as a matter of urgent public importance, the action by the Ministry of Housing and/or the Central Housing and Planning Authority now in progress to demolish some 400 houses situate at Crane, West Coast Demerara.*

*The homeowners, albeit allegedly squatters, have become an established community that has been in existence for over a decade. The decision to destroy these houses while other squatting areas of more racist origin remain untouched, has created widespread anger and resentment and has become a source of great increasing tension which can result in undesirable consequences.*

*Yours sincerely*

***Sdg. Hugh Desmond Hoyte, S.C."***

## Motion to Approve the Estimates of Expenditure for 1999 - Budget Debate: 12<sup>th</sup> April, 1999

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, I think I can best preface my remarks by quoting an extract from a press release put out by the Guyana Public Service Union. The extract reads as follows:

*"The Budget lacks the measures, the vision and innovation to lift Guyanese out of poverty and backwardness and it guaranteed to take them into the new millennium just as poor and backward as they are now. The Government fails to recognise that the new millennium will be one of vast technological change. In order to cope, we must not only be literate but computer-literate. We are not likely to achieve the former much less the latter. The Budget is full of rhetoric and baloney, but the working people have nothing to get other than by struggle."*

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister of Finance claims at page 2 of the Budget Speech that it is a framework for the road ahead. Then he goes on to say:

*"... as such, our objectives this year are to return confidence to the economy, particularly the currency, introduce a comprehensive Programme of Assistance to diversify the economy, focus on budget 'creation' -"*

- I think that is a mistake which hasn't been clarified as yet, I am sure that's not the word he intended

*"- and to improve our social sector."*

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, that is a laudable objective but, unfortunately, the Budget Speech contains no policies or measures designed or calculated to achieve it.

The operative phrase in that sentence is, *"return confidence to"*. I think that, by the phrase, the Minister is admitting that there is no confidence in the economy. Indeed, there is no confidence in the Government, and the whole economy is in shambles.

All around us is the evidence of collapse: collapse in the private sector; collapse in the Public Sector, collapse of the Guyana Airways Corporation, collapse of the MMA, about which the Hon. Member, Mr. Fraser just spoke; collapse of the GNCB, collapse of the Fish Port complexes, which the Government allowed to run down and then handed them over to private people, collapse of roads, road-building projects, to wit the Essequibo Coast road. This collapse is also evident in the private sector with the problems of GRL and IDI, and all business people who are complaining bitterly about the cash crunch they are experiencing. If you look at the *Gazette* every

week, Mr. Speaker, you will see that the banks have been foreclosing on a large number of business entities, so much so, that one person is saying, probably with a great measure of truth, that the banks are becoming the largest landlords in this country.

Mr. Speaker, Hotel Tower is another example of a private sector entity which is collapsing mainly because of the problems in the economy. He blamed GO-INVEST, blamed El Nino, he spent about half of the Budget Speech talking about the international economic situation, and of course, he and others blamed the private sector and inevitable the People's National Congress. But the Budget Speech itself, Mr. Speaker, lays out the gloomy situation which is encapsulated in the fact that there was negative growth. From pretty high growth rate we have gone full circle, and last year we had negative growth. But this was not surprising. It was inevitable and it was foreseen. We in this Honourable House pointed to what was happening with the economy because in the absence of investment and appropriate policies, the economy was bound to run down. So, the time came when the growth rate plateaued out and has not become negative.

What have we got, Mr. Speaker, from the lips of the Minister himself? For last year, a shortfall of revenue of some \$5 billion – that's current revenue and some \$2 billion in capital revenue; a balance of payment gap of US \$22 million, when the Hon. Minister had projected a surplus of \$45 million, so that there is a negative variance of US \$67 million: Our international reserves fell by US \$39 million. There is a fall in output, loss of jobs, more unemployment, more people on the streets, runaway exchange rates, rising cost of living. And the Minister made a great point amidst grand applause from his colleagues on his side of the House that he was imposing no new taxes! But, Mr. Speaker, the most savage taxation occurs through inflation.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Inflation has been taxing the people of this country with the constant rise in prices of goods and services when salaries and wages in the public sector remain virtually static.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the overall budget deficit doubled in 1998. You will recall that the great objective of the Minister's policy, as he told us some years ago, was to constrain the budget deficit. We all know that unless you can make that deficit manageable, you are going to have enormous difficulties in administering the affairs of this country. So instead of the deficit narrowing, it has been widening; and, given all the things that he told us, the fall in output, the fall in revenues, increased unemployment, it is difficult to understand the basis for his optimism that we are going to have growth this year and that revenues will be buoyant. There is no basis at all, even in what he says, for that optimism.

Mr. Speaker, the offshoot from the difficult economic circumstances is plain to be seen – an increase in crime, a lowering of public morale, an increasing sense of insecurity, job insecurity, insecurity of the person of property. All of these things cannot be divorced from the difficult economic circumstances we face. Our expectations would have been – indeed, the public expectation should be – that the Minister would have identified the problems in the economy and would have put forward measures and policies to deal with those problems to resuscitate the economy. Unfortunately, we look in vain for these measures and policies.

Mr. Speaker, an economy cannot grow in the absence of a facilitating environment. We have the policies, we have to have the Programmes, and we have to have the hospitable climate for business to prosper. In order to create that facilitating climate, the Government has to be very, very clear about its economic policies and that is precisely where there has been an abysmal failure. We have, Mr. Speaker, great ambivalence about economic policy, not only ambivalence, but somersaults, as I will indicate in a moment. No county in the world has been able to develop and modernise itself and sustain that development other than through the private sector –

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** – a clear commitment to private sector development. If the Hon. Minister or anybody on the other side knows of any country which has grown, developed, modernised itself and sustained itself other than through private sector investment, I would like to know, I would really like to be educated about that, but I know there is none.

Mr. Speaker, what we want in this country is a clear unambiguous commitment on the part of the Government to create a free and open society in which we develop a true democratic culture and an environment in which ideas are traded without fear and without reservation. Despite all the rhetoric from the Government Benches about democracy and all of that, the reality is that there is still this harsh pressure on anybody who differs from the Government's point of view.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Recently, some business people who wanted to play honest brokers in the political impasse were told *“Go and see Hoyte, and don't come back to see me about any incentives. We are finished with you all.”* Now, that kind of attitude is really bad. That kind of attitude forebodes no good for this county or its development. That kind of attitude does not accord with this principle that, in this democratic culture that we boast about people should be free to express their ideas no matter how unpopular and should be heard. That is not happening.

Within this environment that I am talking about, Mr. Speaker, there ought to be clear, precise and unambiguous commitment to a market economy and to the private sector.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** You cannot develop the country without investment, and the problem we have faced since 1992 October, is the falling away of investment. I don't want to get into all the reasons for that, except to say that the Government has failed signally to attract investment into this country, so as to create new jobs, new wealth, greater public revenues and put this country on a sustainable growth path.

I am not saying, Mr. Speaker, that there is no role for Government. That has never been my position. The Government has, of course, to intervene in the economy. The Government has an important role in the development of social policies to protect the poor and the disadvantaged, not to keep them poor and disadvantaged, but to give them opportunities to rise above their current status.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Those are the things that have not been done, so it is no surprise to anybody who has been following the evolution of our economy over the past six or seven years, that we have reached this stage of negative growth and our economy is in such serious difficulties.

The commitment to the private sector has never been sincere. Mr. Speaker, in the Budget Statement, there are three casual references to the private sector. On page 1 the Minister says: "*the Private Sector is an essential partner.*"

Now, what is meant by that? That is a retreat from what was said before and the commitment given that the private sector would be the leading instrument for economic development in this country. What we are seeing here, Mr. Speaker, is a watered-down version of the Chinese concept about the place of the private sector in the Chinese economy. The Chinese are people who have their own culture, and who are developing their economy in a very special way. What they are doing and what they are saying have little relevance to what we need.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** You are obsessed with marching. I am going to send you into the army.

**[Laughter]**

Again, Mr. Speaker, at page 22 of the Budget Statement, we have this throwaway casual statement: *“The Government will continue to improve the environment for private sector participation in the economy.”*

What does that mean? Having said that, what are the measures and policies to be found in this Budget Speech which exemplify this pious statement? None!

Again, you find, Mr. Speaker, at page 23 of the Budget Statement: *“the Government’s strategy for private sector growth will continue to focus on the establishment of a simple, clear and well-enforced legal framework; improvement to the incentive regime; reinforcing and broadening the financial sector, providing the supporting economic and human infrastructure; and enhancing joint actions by the Government and the private sector in a number of areas.”*

Again, empty rhetoric! It is no use setting out those broad ideas. What we want to see are the concrete provisions which will cause these things to happen. Not to tell the private sector that they must go and see Hoyte.

Mr. Speaker, what is happening, is that the Government has been somersaulting. If you look at all the IMF Policy Framework papers, you will find that in order to attract IMF funding, they say the things that the IMF would like to hear about the private sector.

In 1994, in the Government’s State Paper – incidentally it was laid in this House, put on the Order Paper and then withdrawn; it never saw the light of day again – in this State Paper it is stated: *“The Government considers the private sector, both local and foreign, as the leading edge of economic growth, and the best tool for increasing production and expanding our economic base.”*

That was the Government’s position then. You find again, Mr. Speaker, if you take the Policy Framework Paper, for the stand-by arrangement in 1994, to be accurate the Extended Structural Adjustment Facility, the following: *“The private sector will be the engine of growth in Guyana,”* and again you find, Mr. Speaker, as late as 1996, they are saying the same thing, but now we come to 1999 there is a watering-down. The private sector is an ‘essential partner,’ no longer the ‘leading edge,’ no longer the engine of growth, no longer ‘the instrument for expanding our economy,’ but an adjunct to the Government.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Now that kind of uncertainty isn’t going to impress anybody. It isn’t going to impress local or foreign investors or local or foreign business people.

Mr. Speaker, what has been happening is that the private sector is being stultified. It has not been given the incentives to grow and to expand. The Government withdrew, for example, tax holidays as an investment incentive and then recently restored them. Now what kind of somersaulting is this? What kind of signal are they sending to the business and investing community? It is a signal of confusion that you are not sure what you are

doing or what you want to do, and that maybe policy is dictated by the state of mind of persons who get up on the wrong side of the bed one morning.

Now again, we are told since 1996 that the Government would put in place an Investment Code. In the same document, I referred to a moment ago, Mr. Speaker, you will find the following statement: *“The authorities informed the Mission – that is the IMF Mission - that an Investment Code would be completed soon as an important element to attract investors.”* That was 1996. We are in 1999. We are heading fast towards the year 2000 and no Investment Code. Work has been done, Mr. Speaker, with US AID financing, but it is obvious that the Government is not keen on having any Investment Code, on having a set of principles which would inform investors as to what the policies are and what the incentives are. Despite all the things we read in the various statements by the Minister, about removing discretionary powers – in fact they are unhappy with that and they really want to have a vast discretion to decide who must get investment and who must not get investment.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** How do you explain, Mr. Speaker, that at this time of liberation, which the Government said it commits itself to, the Government is imposing import restrictions? I do not understand the Minister when he said in his Budget Speech that the Government does not intend to impose restrictions. The Minister has published a list of items for which you require licensing, significantly enough including transmitting equipment; (he does not want people to be able to access the means of informing the public through public communications systems) including sanitary napkins; the women in this country have pointed out that they don't want to be forced to buy a substandard product. The only conclusion one could come to is that the Government is trying to protect a supporter who is producing a substandard product for use by the women folk of this country, cut flowers, and a whole host of other things that I don't want to get into. I would really like to hear a defence for the reintroduction of a licensing system.

We all know that the licensing system requires, first of all, a bureaucracy. That bureaucracy is most likely to be inefficient and create windows for favouritism and irregularities. In any case, Mr. Speaker, if you ban an item, it's going to come in any case. People are going to smuggle it in.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** When they smuggle it in, they will sell it at prices lower than the prices at which the legitimate trader can sell, so what is the justification? What is the defence?

Mr. Speaker, what we have is a great measure of confusion. I take the most charitable view and say that the Government, for whatever reason, whether it is a lack of manpower or what, is unable to come up with policy positions which are very clear and which can be enforced. That is very evident as policy towards the private sector is concerned.

Mr. Speaker, an economy doesn't exist in a vacuum. It is part of a total political arrangement and politics impinges very strongly on the possibility of economic growth and development.

The Hon. Member, Mrs. Sahoye-Shury, said yesterday, that the Government could get on without the People's National Congress, could get on without the Opposition. Well, we will see, if that is the belief, well then it is very sad for the People's Progressive Party.

There is, as I said, a great deal of fear and uncertainty in our country. You see it in the reluctance of people in the wider society to express a point of view. All kinds of wrongs and irregularities occur and they will not speak. They come and tell you that this is wrong, and that is wrong, but 'don't call my name.' Little people are being pursued.

We have the case of Mr. Gordon Dublin who worked with the Hon. Samuel Hinds. I am sorry the Hon. Samuel Hinds is not here, I believe, Mr. Dublin's job was terminated and he got a job with courts in January. In February, they said that he was a political liability and he was dismissed because of this liability which he carries. Nothing to do with his honesty, nothing to do with his ability or his experience; but he is a political liability; those are the things. Let us talk about all the grandiose philosophy of democracy and all of that. Look at what is really happening on the ground to ordinary people, those are the things I am concerned about and those are the things I want to talk about. The PPP is coming across as a Party full of arrogance, duplicity and ambivalence. You signal right and you turn left -

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** - that has been the hallmark of the People's Progressive Party.

Mr. Speaker, obviously, as you build a country, you need to have your institutions in place, you cannot build a country without building national institutions in which people have confidence, institutions that cannot be or ought not to be subverted by the Government or any other person, let me talk about three institutions: One is the Race Relations Commission, brought into being with great pomp and ceremony. Big newspaper advertisements. No, we were never consulted. We read in the newspapers that members have been appointed and so a Race Relations Commission was in being. It has not functioned, because it has not been funded, it has not been staffed but I believe it has some office somewhere. How do you explain that, in terms of convincing the people of this country that this Government is serious about institution building?

That is serious about putting in place mechanisms to deal with sensitive and important issues in our country?

Again, Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members talked about the Integrity Commission. I would have thought they would have kept extremely silent about that. In the last days of the last Parliament, the Government rushed through this Integrity Bill. It is now more than one year since then. We are told that three person have been appointed. I don't know anything about two of them, and the other one – maybe, I know too much about him.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, after one year, nothing has happened and we can only suspect that it is not intended that anything would happen to give some fat cats on the PPP side an opportunity to put themselves right. The words I was going to use, would probably not get past the Speaker.

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** The Bill said that after three months, 30 days or something like that, after it has been passed, you should submit your returns. To whom would you submit it? People like myself have no problems, our means are small, I am absolutely sure. As a matter of fact, I can tell you, I had my Accountant draw up my return a long time ago. It is sitting there. So Mr. Speaker, there is that –

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** I cannot afford Christopher Ram. I deal with small accountants.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, the Public Service Appellate Tribunal has not been appointed for over two years. Mr. Speaker, I submitted a Motion to this House, urging the National Assembly to direct that the Tribunal be appointed. The day before the Motion came up for debate, it was announced that the Tribunal has been appointed, in those circumstances, I withdrew the Motion. What are the facts, Mr. Speaker? People have been named, but it is not functioning. It does not have any staff. No public servant can submit any complaint to it. Now isn't that deception? Isn't that duplicity

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Shame! What is it that the Government is doing?

Further, Mr. Speaker, the great problem with our country is the obsession of the PPP with control. They talk about democracy, but in my book, democracy entails devolution of authority, decentralisation of power,

so that large numbers of people become involved in administering the affairs of the country and their community. If you look first of all at every Bill that is being presented to this House, Deeds Registry, Revenue Authority, Bank of Guyana, whatever, in all of them, the Government is concentrating more and more power in the hands of the Minister. There is this obsession with control, and you find that throughout the system.

A few weeks ago an Amerindian delegation came to me. They wanted our support for their position on Constitution Reform. They talked at great length, but what came through was a particular resentment that there was direct interference by the Government in the running of their affairs.

That was their complaint, and I cannot say more than that. Not only did they complain but they were greatly resentful. Mr. Speaker, you see all over this desire to control things, this desire to put all power in the hands of the PPP, and this is not good for our country. It is not good for the development of our institutions. It is not good for this democratic culture which you say you are trying to build in this county.

Now, that is one reason why there has been so much dilatoriness on the privatising issues. I do not believe that this Government is really committed to privatising. True, it has gotten rid of a few shares here and there and some little entities, but when it comes to the main entities, there is a lot of twisting, weaving and catapulting on the part of the Government, I will give you an example in a moment.

Mr. Speaker, let us take GuySuCo –

**[Interruption by Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo.]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** I am not concerned with what you have said, I want to show what you have been saying and how you have been like Chubby Checker, twisting all over the place – twisting the night away.

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, in September, 1993, the Government signed a credit agreement with IDA for the restructuring and privatising of the sugar industry.

**[Interruption by Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo.]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Yes, 1993. I have a document here. Now, in the IMF policy papers you will find a continuing commitment.

**[Inaudible remark by Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo.]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Not and/or – at least give me credit for being able to read.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Now, in the paper of 1994, this was the commitment given, that by June 1995, the Government would have taken all action necessary or advisable to restructure and privatise GuySuCo and it was to be completed by December 1995. In 1996, the same IMF Policy Framework paper with respect to GuySuCo, the Government reiterated its commitment to developing the regulatory framework for restructuring/privatising the company by the end of 1997.

I am not arguing the case as to whether it should be privatised or not. What I am saying is that you have been pursuing a path of duplicity and ambivalence. You signal right and you turn left, and similarly, there are all kinds of proposals for GEC. At one time, I think it was in 1996, the Government told the IMF that it was going to privatise GEC along the Bolivian model. Whatever that means, I do not know. What the Bolivian model was the Government was going to privatise GEC; but then it withdrew that and it committed itself to the following: *“With regards to GEC. The Cabinet has approved its privatisation – 40 percent Government and 60 percent private sector, which is to be completed by year end”*, that is the end of the 1996. Now, that was 40 percent/60 percent. We are now hearing of some privatisation model with CDC and a partner of 50/50. You are shifting from leg to leg and confusing the people because there is no consistency. Our belief is that all of these changes, all of these adjustment have come about because there is a gut feeling there that you do not want to do anything.

I want to say something about the GEC so that there could be no mistake about what I am saying. The CDC and its partners are not stupid people. They are not about to throw away their money. They are not going to buy into political and industrial relations problems. Their own analysis and studies have shown that we have major political problems and we are going to have major industrial relations problems unless the situation is stabilised.

The TUC has already walked away from the agreement and rightly so. The TUF has pointed out, quite rightly, that they cannot agree to the change of any section or provision of the Electricity Sector Reform Act without knowing what this provision or change is all about, what it is going to accommodate. The People’s National Congress has taken a very clear position that it cannot support this process in the absence of information, having regard to the way the Government has proceeded.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** For those reasons, I predict that CDC and its partners will have no truck with the GEC. They are not at all stupid and they understand the political reality. What I am saying is this: all of these

hoped-for investments will not take place unless there is a resolution of the political issues in this county.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** We have seen what has happened to Case Timbers/UNAMCO, where the investors are walking away. That was supposed to be the flagship investment in the forestry sector. The investors ply mill has been lying on the wharf for over a year.

[Hon. Member: Not true!]

**Mr. Hoyte:** They have not moved it. I spoke to Mr. Chase about two days ago and he told me that his mill was still lying there, where is he going to move it to, when the Malaysians have taken a decision to withdraw. The Malaysians are no longer in the game, so there is no project going. I would advise the Minister to go to the wharf and to listen to what people tell him.

Having regard to all of these things, the public morale is very low. The talk is about crime, insecurity, cost of living – I have here a document which was given to me today by a housewife. She is complaining about how prices are running away, that in December 1997, flour was \$38 per lb., in December 1998, it was \$40 per lb. Now, in April 1999, it is \$50 per lb.

[Miss Sandra Adams: Not \$50, \$55.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Persons who know better are correcting me. Rice was \$180, it is now \$240, sugar was \$30, it is not \$35. We know that we subsidise sugar to the consumers in this country.

[Interruption]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Salt which was \$20 is now \$25, bread which was \$100 per loaf, is now \$140 and the bakers are giving you a smaller loaf, matches were \$7.97, now \$15 per packet. Milk which was \$160 per pound is now \$240 per pound. Split peas \$40 per pound, now \$50, onions \$30 per pound, now \$50 per pound, garlic - \$90 per pound now \$120 per pound and potatoes which were \$30 per pound are now \$45 per pound. Those are the realities; do not tell the housewife about inflation, 5 percent, 2 percent or 3 percent. She is concerned with hard cash and what her money can buy.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** She is faced with the reality that everything she goes to the shop her money is buying less and less.

Mr. Speaker, in those circumstances, people cannot make ends meet and that is the problem that the ordinary citizens are facing.

[Miss Sandra Adams: This is a caring Government.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** That is why the rate of emigration is so high. When the PPP came into office, its members said that there are thousands of Guyanese people ready to come back to Guyana once the Party had won. Now, what has happened to those thousands of people? Not only have the noughts disappeared but the one has disappeared. Those persons who came back have gone again.

We cannot close our eyes to the fact that people are hurting and they are hurting because we are not remunerating them properly. You cannot offer the Public Servants three percent. What are they going to do with that? I understand the Minister's dilemma that under the Fund Programme, he cannot increase wages and salaries higher than the projected rate of inflation. That is a fact and I do not think he would deny it. That is why the Government projects low rates of inflation so that it would pay salaries that are pretty low. Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting when we compare the rhetoric with the reality. In 1996, the Policy Framework Paper, to which I have already referred, said this: "*The authorities indicated that as revenue collection improved and expenditure is streamlined, civil service wages will increase by stages to about 80 percent on the private sector level by the year 2000.*" We are in 1999.

[Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo: You added the year 2000.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I added it? My dear friend, no, no, shame! You are accusing me of such dishonesty? Let me read it again because the whole country is looking on. You are accusing me of lying. Here in the Policy Framework Paper: "*...wages could be increased in stages to about 80 percent of the private sector level by the year 2000.*" You are telling me that it does not have 'year 2000'? I must have printed the Policy Framework Paper, which you have adopted. Are you telling me that it is not the Government of Guyana saying that?

Mr. Speaker, more than that, in order to qualify for HIPIC funding, the Government agreed that it would increase the wages of Government employees to within striking distance of 80 percent of the private sector salaries and wages. In 1998, the Government sought the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat to do a study of the differential between private sector and Public Sector wages.

I have in my hands here, the report – Do you want to see this too?

[Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo: I know about that. You are quoting that one correctly.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Well, you must know about it. Mr. Speaker what happened? When the Minister realised the magnitude of the gap between Government employees' wages and salaries and those of the private sector, he then sought to get the team of consultants to change the documents.

[Cries of oh! Oh!]

**Mr. Hoyte:** The team, Mr. Speaker, being professional people, absolutely refused. Then, the Government retained Peat Marwick to do some adjustments. That is why you find in the Budget Speech, the Minister says at page 17, paragraph 3.55:

*"The Government undertook a survey of private sector remuneration and is currently using this information to develop a remuneration package for the professional staff in the Civil Service."*

This is not based on the Commonwealth Report but based on a revised, amended, sanitised report done by Peat Marwick.

Mr. Speaker, these things depress people's morale. They sap their confidence because all Public Servants know what has happened, they know of these commitments and they know that they have nothing to get by way of proper salary adjustments from the Government. The Government will talk the talk, the Government will spout the rhetoric but when the time comes for action, the Government will be found wanting.

Mr. Speaker, everybody knows that morale is very low in the Public Service because the Government pretends to pay the Public Servants and the Public Servants pretend to work.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** This has repercussions in the wider society. Public morale is low because you cannot get proper service from various Government Agencies. You get a kind of a tidal wave sweeping through the society.

A few months ago, the Government introduced the Deeds Registry Authority Act to remove the Deeds Registry from under the Public Service Commission control and put it separately as an independent body giving the Minister a lot of power, power to appoint the Registrar and all of that. Then the Minister said that because of this change the Deeds Registry is going to perform more efficiently and it is going to expedite the passing of transports and documents of title. Mr. Speaker, that is remarkable because, apart from moving the Deeds Registry from its former location, nothing has been done about it. It has not been restructured, it has not been streamlined, salaries and wages have not been increased and it remains what is used to be before.

Mr. Speaker, these are the things which are causing great problems in our society. I do not want to spend too much time on the court system but it think that we are in serious danger if we do not do something radical and urgent about the Judiciary, the Magistracy and the Supreme Court Registry. A little consideration will show that you do nothing if you improve conditions in the Deeds Registry, which you haven't done, and you leave the Registry of the Supreme Court unattended.

Now, no amount of PR, no amount of propaganda, is going to change these facts, what we want and what the country needs is an earnest commitment to do things right. Until people are satisfied that the Government wants to do things right, we are going to have a lot of instability and confusion.

I understand that a lot was said about the dialogue, the **Herdmanston Accord** and the **St. Lucia Statement**. If people want to fool themselves, they can fool themselves. If they are of the view that the agreements there arose out of magnanimity on the part of the PPP, they can fool themselves, we will not argue, we will not quarrel with you. If you do not want to admit that it was a result of the intensity of the protest which brought the PPP to the table to sign the documents and all of that, well then you can believe that. It is not true, and all of the people in this country know that it is not true. I do not want to waste a lot of time on that because you cannot obscure that truth by PR or propaganda.

What I want to talk about is a greater danger, the danger which lies in the retreat of the PPP from the dialogue and indeed, the provisions of the **Accord** and the **Statement**. We had opted for a course of reason. Do not tell us that you did not go through a lot of fear and trembling in December 1997 and January 1998. Do not tell us that. We know different. We are not interested in destroying this country because you do not have a monopoly of loyalty; sometimes you talk as though you have a monopoly of loyalty. We are as interested in the development of this country as well as anybody else. We are interested in its prosperity and we know that we are not going to get any development and prosperity unless there is good governance, so, all of our struggle is towards bringing about a situation where, you on that side, understand and accept that you have to get about the business of putting systems and procedures for good governance in this country.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** It is no use saying that if people protest, police are going to shoot them down as the new Minister Hon. Mr. Gajraj has said. It is no use saying that you are going to detain Hoyte as my good friend, Mr. Nagamootoo, has said. Those are unimportant things because you believe that the problem is Hoyte. The problem is not Hoyte, the problem lies in the failure to administer the affairs of this country properly and give at least an impression of fairness and equity in dealing with citizens.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Those are the things which we are concerned about, and whether Hoyte is here or not, if people are sufficiently annoyed and angry they will get up and march and protest, guns and no guns.

I was reading a novel by Turgenev a few nights ago and in that novel one of the characters said –

[**Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo:** You have time to read?]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Yes, I read, no amount of politics can prevent me from reading. I have a life apart from politics.

[Interruption]

**Mr. Hoyte:** That is world literature. This character said to the other one: *“It only took one man with one candle to burn down Moscow”*. He was talking about the great fire in Moscow in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One man with one candle. So these instruments of terror and fear are not going to repress anybody. They are not going to make people afraid, they are not going to terrorise anybody. In the final analysis, they are useless, absolutely useless.

What is useful and what, to our mind, is the only course, is earnest discussions in good faith. Discussions without arrogance, without duplicity, discussions aimed at arriving at reasonable and rational conclusions that are in the interest of this country. It could not be in the interest of this country to want to exclude large numbers of people from some kind of involvement at various levels.

Let me just explain what I mean. People have said to me, *“You guys have been dealing with trivial things in the dialogue.”* One diplomat said to me that in the dialogue we, that is the PNC, were trenching upon Governmental matters, which we found very interesting because shortly after Dr. Luncheon said the same thing. He suddenly realised that in the dialogue we were discussing things which belonged to the Government.

[**Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo:** And then he said ‘not equal’.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Forget about the not equal part.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** And then, Mr. Speaker, I got a letter from Mrs. Jagan, in which she is suggesting an agenda with a whole lot of Government policy matters, and that is why I say there is confusion in their camp. That is why I say they signal right and turn left. That is why I say there is somersaulting, if not, convulsions, on these matters.

I just want to bring one small matter to attention, because it is so very important. We were talking, Mr. Speaker, about representation on boards and committees, now, what is so terrible wrong with that? But I have heard it said that that isn't done in any other Caribbean country. We are not concerned about other Caribbean countries. We are concerned about building systems and mechanisms for ourselves, that will, in our peculiar circumstances, make our political life more stable.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Interestingly enough, a diplomat told me that same story; that it doesn't happen in other countries. So what?

We were talking, Mr. Speaker, about the Land Selection Committees. What is wrong with a principle which says, first of all, all Parties winning seats in a region should be represented as a matter of right, and that the majority of members should go to the Party that got the greatest number of seats. I would have thought that was a rational and reasonable proposal. But it found great opposition.

Let me explain why it is important to us, Mr. Speaker, because on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 1998, the Commissioner of Lands and Surveys, Mr. Datadin, wrote a letter to a gentleman by the name of Mr. Khemraj Rai, who happens to be a member of the Central Committee of the People's Progressive Party. The letter reads as follows: I think it is important that we should understand what the People's National Congress was fighting against.

*"Dear Sir,*

*I am pleased to inform you, that the Minister of Agriculture and Parliamentary Affairs has appointed you Chairman of the Regional Land Selection Committee, Region 4, Central Demerara/Mahaica. The membership of this committee is a follow:*

- (1) Mr. Khemraj Rai*
- (2) Mr. Need Kumar*
- (3) Mr. Omar Khan*
- (4) Mr. Parbhudyal Sattan*
- (5) Mr. Adit Narine Buddha*
- (6) Mr. Madan Gopaul*
- (7) Mr. Hardar Tilky*
- (8) Mr. A representative of Region 4."*

Now, Mr. Speaker, this letter has to be read for the enormity of its implications to be understood. It only has to be read to understand why the People's National Congress would rise up in anger, and call for some kind of arrangement where this kind of atrocity would not be perpetrated.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** We sent a delegation to the Minister, and the Minister undertook to deal with this matter, now, Mr. Speaker, nearly one year later, it hasn't been dealt with. In the meantime, land is being distributed in those regions and people are not amused, because it doesn't matter what you say, if they get a perception that the mechanisms are unfair, their perception will reinforce that the actual distribution is unfair.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I can go on with this matter to point out that in Bartica, Region 7, where we won again, the Chairman is the PPP's Member of Parliament for that area. Mr. Speaker, I think I have said enough. I am not going to follow all the political points made by our friends about pressure will bring pressure. We are sufficiently confident in ourselves. We are sufficiently confident in our ability to act and react. But we are also know, that we want to be part and parcel of the shaping of that future to create a country where all people can live in peace and harmony; where they can have a comfortable life and where all of us can be proud to stand up and say, like the old Romans "*I am a Guyanese citizen.*"

[Applause]

## Motion on the Approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for 2000: 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2000

[The Speaker: The Hon. Member, Mr. Hoyte.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member Mr. Harripersaud Nokta was in grave difficulties because the person, the Honourable Member who read the Budget, in fact read his traditional speech. So he had to find something new. And in his perambulations, he sought to accuse me of being 71 years of age, I never denied that.

I have reached the age of 71, but during that time, my name never passed into the Guyanese lexicon as a synonym for corruption and fraud and kickbacks.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** In all, My Speaker, have I had occasion to say the two sports cars were not mine, they were my son's, but my son never worked anywhere to accumulate money to buy those cars, yes, I am 71, and I am proud of it. But the People's National Congress has never imposed on this country a succubus who squatted upon the body politic, and leached on the lives of our people. If you want to talk about age and performance, we can spend a lot of time talking about that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have more important things to dwell on, more important people to respond to. A Budget really has no meaning outside of a political context. If you divorce it from the political context, it is meaningless. And so I want to spend some time talking about the political context in which this Budget has been presented.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have been short-changed in this Honourable House. If the Honourable Member, Mr. Saisnarine Kowlessar, had been in the pantheon he would have been the god Hermes who was one of the greater gods. And so he comes here bringing a document which is not his, and which he read with gusto, but I believe, alas, with little understanding.

Today, Mr. Speaker, development and progress depends largely upon political stability. And political stability depends upon two things: a Government that has some legitimacy, and a Government which governs fairly.

The Honourable Member and others who spoke before him, talked a great deal about fraud and corruption and things like that. But in this Budget document, the Estimates, rather, of the Public Sector, Volume 2, this here Minister's document says that – and this is the profile of the Programme – the monies he is allocating for the forthcoming elections are intended to reduce discrepancies and fraud related to elections, their

admission, we're not saying that. What we had to say, and have to say, is being said in the courts of law, but he uses this Budget to admit that there are discrepancies and fraud thereby confirming the statements we have been making and the allegations we have been making since the last general elections.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Neither of the two conditions that I refer to, exists.

After the 1997 elections, there were protests, demonstrations, because people were unhappy with the election results, they did not accept them and they still don't.

But, Mr. Speaker, there was a compromise which was recorded in the **Herdmanston Accord** and the **Herdmanston Accord** passed in law, the Constitution Reform Act triggered a process of constitutional and electoral reforms. One of the key elements, in fact the process which has been triggered, has an end result, which is elections by the 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2001. And that date is critical, because it was the compromise which brought an end to the demonstrations and the anger which people showed, as a result of their unhappiness with the last elections.

Mr. Speaker, we've all worked very hard towards realizing elections by this date. But recently there have been some disturbing happenings. Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo is on record as saying that if the elections aren't held by the 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2001 then the PPP will remain in office hopefully for another two years. That is a dangerous and provocative statement. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, now, because I am being very serious, that the People's National Congress will never accept that.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Though we need to understand the seriousness of the situation that we are in and not spend any time trying to frustrate the effort. And there's a feeling abroad now that there are subtle attempts to derail the process.

The Honourable Member, Mr. Nagamottoo, I don't recall whether it is a letter or statement, he is on record as again saying that the Constitution Reform Act really has no validity. That is the sum total of what he was saying. That they did not amend the Constitution and therefore what it says there doesn't really matter. Well, for us it does matter, Mr. Speaker, it matters profoundly.

And then, Mr. Speaker, we have been having some strange happenings as the efforts to frame the laws that are necessary are put in train.

Legal draftsmen are giving instructions to the effect that this new Elections Commission is a permanent body. We all agreed on that, but the first draft comes out saying that it is a temporary one. And instructions

were given again that you are in error. That is not your brief. The Elections Commission is a permanent body. Lo and behold, the new draft comes back, it's a temporary one.

Mr. Speaker, could this be accidental? And then we get a third draft which still has errors. I am advised, and you will forgive us if we come to the conclusion that somebody is attempting to pursue a perilous course, and we hope that wisdom and better judgment will prevail.

And that is why I say, Mr. Speaker, that this Budget here has to be related to the political climate, because if the political climate deteriorates, well then, all the hopes and expectations which are set out here, would be in vain.

The Budget follows the old pattern, a lot of jargon, particularly the latest jargon of the IMF. Discipline has its jargon, and economics has its jargon, so we are getting jargon every year, nobody bothers with old M1, M2 and M3 now. It's narrow money and broad money. Next year there will be high money and low money.

But, Mr. Speaker, the man-in-the street, the ordinary citizen, the housewife, those people, are not interested in jargons. They are interested in the reality which they know and which they understand.

We note the concern that there is no adequate provision in the Estimates for running the elections. In our view it is the responsibility and obligation of the Government to finance elections. If the Government wants, it can go to foreign governments and external agencies to seek financial support, but in the final analysis, elections cannot depend upon whether or not foreign governments and external agencies finance our elections.

And so we must have in this Budget an appropriation which will ensure European Union or no European Union, US Government or no US Government, UNDP or no UNDP, the elections can be financed and can take place in this country in accordance with agreements that we have made. And the date set by us.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the Budget statement does not identify the real problems in this country and tell people in direct ways how the Government proposes to deal with these problems. And what are the real problems? They have to deal, first and foremost, in my judgment, with unemployment, unemployment particularly among young people. The reality has to do with the health and education, both of which sectors are deteriorating badly. They have to do with questions of personal security, they have to do with housing, they have to do with income and poverty alleviation.

Unemployment is so critical that we see it wherever we go. Up to this afternoon as I was coming to this Honourable House, there were workers

picketing the ministry opposite this building, workers of the MMA/ADA, complaining that they haven't got their wages. And in so many other Government agencies, wages have not been forthcoming or they have been late. But that reflects the inability of the Government to sustain its own labour force.

I heard the Honourable Member Ms. Teixeira talking about the reduction of the Public Sector under the PNC. But if you read, Mr. Speaker, the *Guyana Statistical Bulletin*, Volume 8, No. 3, September 1999, you will see the reality which she is attempting to deny, because it shows, Mr. Speaker, that from 1991, we are talking now about the PPP, watch down to 1998, the Public Sector employment declined by 23,352 workers. A drop of some 36 percent.

And we are in a situation now where the Government is threatening the severance of another 8,000 workers in the Public Sector. And these people who would be put on the road are going, Mr. Speaker, to join -

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** - no I am not inflating, they're saying two now, but the ultimate goal is eight. And, they're starting with two from the ranks of an army of unemployed people. People who lost their jobs in the private sector, Quebana has just been closed down, other forestry operations have been retrenching for the past three, four years. Private sector people have sent people off. And we're creating a monster of unemployment. Then the Government comes here and does not say to this Honourable House and to the people of this country how it proposes to deal with the question of unemployment.

The tragedy, Mr. Speaker, is that the people hardest hit are young people. Young people who have graduated from the technical schools, from secondary schools, from the University of Guyana. I meet them every day. Some of them having graduated two, three, years, cannot find employment. Others are employed in jobs far below their qualifications and their training, but they can't do better. Now we are not going to get any impact on the unemployment problem, unless we can bring investment into this country.

Mr. Speaker, I was not here, but I saw the Honourable Member on the TV, that is Mr. Rohee, holding forth to the effect that the PNC has been scaring away investors, that is his excuse for the absence of instruments in this country.

Mr. Speaker, everybody knows that the PNC is the advocate of investment.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** It is the PNC which started the process of major investments in this country. And after we demitted office, Mr. Speaker, I myself have a proud record of going in many parts of the world to promote this country.

I went to the Republic of Korea three times, I went to the United States several times, Miami, Baltimore, Atlanta. I went to Canada several times. My Honourable colleague, Mr. Allen, will tell you, he, accompanied me. I went to the People's Republic of China where the question of economic involvement was discussed with us and where, if the Honourable Member wishes to share with you we signed a document, not at Government to Government level, but a level of enterprise to enterprise, to see how, between Chinese business people and Guyanese business people we can get the process of investment going. So there is no question of the PNC trying to prevent investment.

I remember, Mr. Speaker, that when the group of businessmen who were responsible for *Guyana 21* published their document, I went to Miami along with Mr. Stanley Ming, and we spoke with the Head of the Japanese business community in the United States.

Mr. Quorayaba, who was quite excited about this project, he was excited with the concept which, of course, one senior Government official had dismissed as being hocus-pocus. Had he not said to us, that if the Government was willing to throw its weight behind this project, he could raise from the Japanese Government US\$50M to do the initial studies?

And what we was seeing, Mr. Speaker, was not only the possibility, but the probability, that if you have a major project like that going, Japanese businessman *must get*, not many, must get a piece of the action.

Whether you are getting consultants or you are using computers or you are buying heavy earth-moving equipment, whatever it was, the Japanese are bound to get a piece of the action, and so I dismissed this wanton allegation that the People's National Congress is not interested in this country, is not promoting investment, and trying to scare off business people. Sure, if you attempt to enter into arrangements that we don't understand and we don't know anything about, we will object to it -

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** - as we objected to the GPL deal, not on the principle of privatization, not on the principle of foreign capital, but because the Government behaved in such a secretive manner, that up to now nobody knows what is happening. As a matter of fact there are some people who are saying that these people seem to be worse than the old GEC. My own home, some days, you can't get the fluorescent light to function. The power is so weak, so low.

Mr. Speaker, and finally, well, BEAL is the same story, but it is because of our known commitment to private sector development, our known advocacy of investment, that I was invited in my own capacity and as leader of the People's National Congress to make a special presentation to the Investing in the Americas Conference which starts on Monday next.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, there is no proposal for dealing with the problem of unemployment. It is dismissed casually, as if it doesn't exist, or as if by some magic it is going to cure itself.

There was much talk about education. Mr. Speaker, again, the jargon, hardware and software in the education sector. What is the Government doing to ensure that education is delivered to our young people? Delivered not only qualitatively, but quantitatively? Nothing at all about that.

The Primary Education Improvement Project, which was put in place by the People's National Congress Government envisaged that we would have been bringing our young people at the primary school level into the information technology age, that we would have been teaching them the use of computers, and after all this time, the children are yet to benefit from such a Programme.

A little thing here and there, but it had seven years, they inherited a Programme which had this as a key component, and they are done nothing about it.

What are they doing, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that they retain our teachers? It is no use telling us that they have built schools, hardware, it is no use telling us they are going to buy books, software. Who are the people to deliver? What are they doing about the teachers? I've been looking at the statistics which show that the teachers are leaving the system at a rapid rate.

In December 1996, I made a brief visit to St. Lucia and was appalled to find in that small Caribbean island over 1,000 young Guyanese professionals, and they were the people who were maintaining the education and healthcare system in that country. I spoke to many of them and asked well, why have you left Guyana? And they all said to me, we didn't leave home because we wanted to leave home, we left home because we couldn't make ends meet.

I met a young lady there who was a pharmacist, and she said to me that her salary was so low that she could not afford to pay the rent for decent accommodation, and therefore she was ashamed to invite any friend to visit her. So after a time the embarrassment was too much to bear, and she left for that country, where she was getting a better salary and better conditions of service.

Mr. Speaker, what are we doing to prevent these people from going off in the large numbers in which they are going? The teachers, the rate

of exodus by them is 1,000 a year. That is it. That is the magnitude of the problem we are facing.

Now, nowhere in the Budget Statement are we told how the Government is going to address this serious problem. And yet there are great hopes for increase and improvement in the quality of our education. It is not going to happen, Mr. Speaker. It is not going to happen until we ensure that our teachers can remain at their posts and are happy and enthusiastic about performing their tasks.

And now, Mr. Speaker, the rate of dropouts is so great, I was appalled to read in the newspapers that the police had raided a number of Nintendo game operations, and found large numbers of children of school-age who should have been at school, playing those games. Some of them, according to the report, had never gone to school.

And I wish to reinforce this finding: a few nights ago on Mr. Sharma's programme '**Justice for All**', an excellent programme, because it gives the ordinary man a voice, which normally would never have one.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** And it shows the other side of the coin to the PPP propaganda, it shows reality, and on that programme, Mr. Speaker, there was this little boy who said he was nine, he had never gone to school. His mother was dead, he was being cared for by some kind lady at Mocha, but the person had to go and earn her own living, so many days he says, he never got food because she was out the whole day.

Now, if we are not careful, Mr. Speaker, we are going to lose a whole generation of young people. You can't repair that gap, once it is created.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is this: that in the old days there used to be Truancy Officers, and these people would go to the home of parents if a child is missing from school for two, three days, and then very early on you will pick up whether the child was being truant, but it appears that all those systems have broken down. And it is no use talking about improving the education system unless we can ensure that our children are in school, that they are not dropping out of the system, they are not crawling between the cracks.

And I don't need to say, Mr. Speaker, that another aspect of this whole thing is whether the children can have a meal in the morning before they go to school. Very many of them don't have it, and therefore both they and their parents decided that they would not go to school on certain days.

Mr. Speaker, one important matter that everybody is talking about these days: the aid donors, the bilateral associates, the Government of this country, poverty alleviation. One time this Government called it poverty eradication. I don't know that that will ever happen.

I looked in vain, Mr. Speaker, at all the Budgets of the PPP/Civic Government, every single one from 1993, and in all of them, this issue was dismissed in

a few words. We will spend so much money on poverty alleviation or poverty reduction as the case may be. But there has never put this House, and to the people of this country, a Programme to achieve this laudable end. It is no use talking about allocating money, the money has to be spent on something. And it has to be spent if it's going to be effectual and if it is going to bring benefits to the people who matter, it will have to be spent on a Programme that's capably conceptualised and implemented. And I can find no Programme and certainly in this Budget Statement here there has been no statement at all setting out a poverty amelioration or alleviation Programme.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to say a few words on the Hon. Gentleman, Mr. Rohee's presentation, which I saw on the TV, as I said, but the night is far spent and I don't think it is worthwhile, except to say I listened to him and I learnt that we are the people who brought investments into this country, who advocate investment. And I learnt that he's saying that it will take thirty years to do anything for this country. He said that.

Well in that case, Mr. Speaker, what hope have our children? If that is the time frame that the Hon. Member thinks, well, all I said, I don't want to go down that road it is not worthwhile.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable Member, Mr. DaSilva, in his maiden speech, did attempt to avoid personalities, he dealt with issues, and I think he ought to be congratulated for that.

### [Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** He made a very important point, which was that the image of this country is important. If the country gets a bad image, well, then, people are not going to come here, they are going to join in the chorus of abuse and denaturation of us, and we are going to suffer, and I want to lay the blame squarely at the feet of the People's Progressive Party for disseminating a lot of false news about this country, in the belief that they are harming the People's National Congress. Go on the website and see some of the things they have there.

I met a Guyanese who came back from the United States two weeks ago, and the young lady was saying to me that she wanted to come back long time, but from the things she was reading on the internet she was afraid to come.

Well, I tell you, Mr. Speaker, I tell you this, you know we are talking about image, I went to Canada in 1996, and as a Guyanese, and a person concerned about our country, and a person who tries his best to observe protocol. The person who organises things for me, got in touch with the then Counsel General and he said to him "*Mr. Hoyte is coming, can we make an appointment for him to pay a courtesy call on you*". I don't know I am not calling any name. The gentleman said to my host, "*he didn't know, he has to consult Georgetown.*"

I arrived in Canada and started my visit and my host then called the Counsel General and said, *“Mr. Hoyte is here, when can he call to see you?”* And the Counsel General said, *“well, my deputy is on leave, second, I have an important meeting with the immigration authorities, thirdly, I have some domestic problems, and fourthly, all the people working at the Consulate are Government employees, and if Mr. Hoyte comes here he would be embarrassed”*. You know what was happening there, Mr. Speaker, was a perception that the Consulate belongs to the People’s Progressive Party.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** And not that, Mr. Speaker, it was a national institution for Guyanese, but I must say, to be fair Mr. Speaker, that when I went up to Ottawa, I was graciously received by the High Commissioner, Mr. Brindley Benn.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** So, I felt I had done my duty.

Now, when these things happen, what image does the country get? And what image does the country get when we have important Ministers who don’t know the area of Guyana, and who are there on TV disputing with a journalist and saying that this country is twice the size, the area that it has. Those are the things that make us a laughing stock, and not only our young people, but people abroad say, well, what kind of Government is this? There are some other things, but we cannot come across as being united, sophisticated people, and very often this is the image we project.

And if these things happen, Mr. Speaker well then, it is no use saying that people are bad-talking us, that our image is bad or that investment is not coming. It is not the People’s National Congress.

The People’s National Congress cannot and would not set out deliberately to impair the image of this country.

I say that we have a reality in this country that you cannot ignore.

When in our history have we had so many suicides, including little children?

When in our history, Mr. Speaker. Have there been so many street families?

When in our history have there been pervasive hunger among young people?

When in our history, Mr. Speaker, has there been such pervasive crime?

When in our history has the exodus of our people been so great?

No matter who started it. The late Dr. Jagan boasted that whenever he got into power, he had thousands of Guyanese to return home. Where are they?

Mr. Speaker, we were told that people will come and work for a dollar a year. The reality is that the exodus continues. Don't bother with who started it, the fact of the matter is that you have not been able to stop it

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** And, really, what can we deduce from all of these things: the suicides, life, homelessness and so on, a great sense, a profound sense of unhappiness. People are unhappy in this country. The PPP has robbed them of happiness, and, really, cannot find the means of restoring that happiness to people in this country.

You go to the hospital, Mr. Speaker, the equipment is malfunctioning, and giving the wrong diagnosis. So don't talk about Burnham, Burnham is dead these many years. Talk about those who are being killed now.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** The absence of staff, Mr. Speaker. I met a man a few months ago, a poor man, in fact he supplemented his income by begging, and his problem was that he broke his hand, went to the hospital and was told that he had to buy the plaster of paris to make the cast for his hand. And I was told that his 'matter dark.'

When I went to see Mr. Gus Agard, an old trade union man – he died – and he was telling me that all he was getting from the hospital was a bed. I said "*what do you mean?*" He says, "*well, if I have to get an x-ray, I have to go to Prashad Hospital and pay, if I want medication, I have to send outside and get it.*" All he was getting was a bed. And that is true, and that remains true of so many people today.

And if you go around and talk to people they will tell you that bandages, they have to buy, they have to supply these things. And I am saying that if we get ourselves into a denial mode we will never ever correct the situation in which we find ourselves.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** I don't know if this is true. I have not confirmed it personally, but I will pass it on for what it worth, and that is, that people of the Palms are being sent out to beg.

[Interruption]

**Mr. Hoyte:** ...Well, it is no use dismissing it without investigating. You say to tell you when things are going wrong, and now, you are being told, instead of making a note of it, you're saying it is not true. Well, I heard it this morning myself, okay? Well, say that you're investigating it and I'll listen to you.

Mr. Speaker, much song and dance was being made about housing. In the Budget Statement it is called a revolution, but what is the reality? House lots are being distributed, house lots not houses, these thousands and thousands of allocations that are being talked about, are not houses, they're house lots.

In the dialogue under the **Hermanston Accord** when we asked the PPP side to give us statistics on the distribution, they said they didn't have any. Isn't that so, Lance? Well, they don't have them, we never got it out of the dialogue. But then when the Cabinet went on its excursion to Berbice, we heard a number. And then in this Budget Statement you are hearing about how many thousands of house lots have been distributed. Good, but what is the reality?

A number of persons are being given lots, sometimes they put their hands in a bag and they get a number for land which is not developed, no infrastructure, so the person can't go and say lot 36, this is my lot. People also find that when they go for a lot, ten, twelve people are claiming the same lot, and have receipts for that particular lot. And I am not guessing, Mr. Speaker, last Sunday I was in Sophia, and talked with people, and heard all kinds of opposition. I mean apart from the rascality of private people who go in there and sell and rob people of their money, there is Governmental incompetence and corruption

Mr. Speaker, people who have paid \$8,000 initially in field 'B' are now being asked to pay \$29,000. So the people say, "*all right, you have \$8,000 for us, so therefore we'll pay you \$21,000.*" They say, "*no, you pay us the \$29,000.*" Don't shake your head, that is fact. And Mr. Speaker, there is a reason for that, and the reason is this: that the accounts of Central Government and Planning Authority are in total disarray.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** They cannot tell you who has paid what, or how much for what.

In 1977, there was an attempt to sort out this problem, and a young man by the name of Hardat Singh was employed, he was an accountant, and he was a lecturer at UG. I will tell you what happened to him when they discovered, Mr. Speaker, that his name was on the PNC list of candidates, he was dismissed.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** That is the story. Why you don't dismiss him before? Shame on you. So you come now full circle.

Mr. Speaker, There's this allegation and counter allegation of corruption, and who started corruption and who didn't start it, and all of that. The Hon. Colleague is saying that PNC started corruption. I do not

know if he never heard of the Delconte scandal, where the PPP paid Delconte all the money up front to do a road, the Makouria Road. And the road was never built, and all they left there was a head of scrap iron, some of the scrap iron is still lying there to this day.

It was not the PNC who started corruption, let us not waste time on that, on history. Let us accept the fact that we have a lot of it today, some official, some unofficial, some political, some administrative, and see what we can do about dealing with this major problem in our country.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot continue to be giving jobs to the boys because of particular affiliations. Here are we with the sluice at Charity Market, poor Charity, the Government is not being charitable to that institution at all.

**[Laughter]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** And GUYSUCO which was awarded the contract, doesn't carry out the terms of the contract.

At February only 30 percent of the work when they should have been nearly finished by now, is being done using a drop hammer instead of a pneumatic hammer. And when the place is flooded and the people started to shout and protest in March, on the recommendation of the D&I Board, then they decided to take action. Everybody knows the man is using a drophammer to drive piles, that is not a secret.

The big thing is everybody is seeing every day, including the regional people, including the people from the Ministry, those who are supervising, it is only when things start to go wrong, and it has become a political scandal, that you all go in, to deal with him. So don't tell me I got it wrong. I don't have it wrong. I have facts and figures here before me.

Mr. Speaker, we are not on an island by ourselves, isolated from the rest of the world. Well, that point was made by all the people who talked about globalization and some people believe that we've been able to resist the impact of globalization, that is not true. We can't proceed on our own as if we could isolate and insulate ourselves against this process. And I think it is the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira who said quite rightly, globalization is nothing new. It started many, many years ago and what has happened now, it is gained momentum as it reaches fruition.

But, Mr. Speaker, we can only deal with this phenomenon as part of a wider globalization. We cannot isolate ourselves from CARICOM which is our natural economic zone and community. And yet I get a feeling, Mr. Speaker, and it's more than a feeling, I think the evidence is there, that the PPP/Civic Government is now becoming ambivalent about its relation with CARICOM. Too many statements are being made about whether or not CARICOM is viable and how many years it will take for certain processes to be completed. That is negative talk which is not helpful to the process or to Guyana.

I read in the news papers, and I hope it is not true, because I know too well, that the newspapers sometimes get things very wrong, that the Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry said that Guyana was going to withdraw from the CTO. I hope that is not true.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** ...Well, then you should make it public, because they said so definitively, and they said also that you said that Guyana is going to market its own products. And I said to myself what a backward move is this? So, I'm very happy to hear the Minister say in this Honourable House that that was not true.

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** ...All right, whatever it is, I think you have a duty to tell the Guyanese people that they've been misled by the medium.

And then, Mr. Speaker, CARDI, we have virtually caused the collapse of CARDI. We owe million in our dues, and the result of that is that CARDI has folded.

How could we, as good integrationists, which we claim to be, how could we as a country do this? I heard the Hon. Member talk about the great potential, the breadbasket, CARICOM has identified us as we are responsible for food security.

How can we be responsible for the demise of the Caribbean Agricultural Research Development Institute? How can we, and how can we face our colleagues in CARICOM, and say that we are good integrationists, beat our breasts and say we are committed to the principles and objects of the Treaty of Chaguramus?

What is more Mr. Speaker, we have in this country another important CARICOM institution REPAHA, and for this year we only have one Guyanese student. Aren't we training people for the animal husbandry sector?

What, you said it is not true, my friend? Well, then, Mr. Speaker, you must tell us what the truth is. I am telling you the results of my research, and I'm telling you the results of the information which I have available, I am not guessing. And the Hon. Minister must tell us then, Mr. Speaker, what has been happening.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, the Caribbean Appeal Court, we read with interest in the newspapers all kinds of statements about the Court. I think last night there was a programme with the Attorney-General, some countries talking about this matter here. Well, I don't know if the people of this country realize that the Government has never said one word to the Peoples National Congress about this important Caribbean institution which they intend to accede to. Not a single word, are they taking it for

granted. That we will just sit down and go along with it, have no part in the process, no part in the deliberations? And I think the same thing holds with the Political Parties and Opposition. Mr. Speaker, it is all well and good to say we must work together, fine. It's not going to happen until everybody would mouth it and articulate it, and it's not going to happen until we approach the question of governance in a more sophisticated manner and until we show a genuine desire to want to work together and to ensure that there are the mechanisms in place, and the modalities which will enable us as Guyanese people who love this country to work for its promotion, its advancement and its progress. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**[Applause]**

## Motion on the Approval of the Appointment of a Special Select Committee To Review Public Holidays: 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2000

*“BE IT RESOLVED:*

*That this National Assembly approves the establishment of a Special Select Committee to review the Public Holidays constituted under the Public Holidays Act Chapter 19:09, and to report thereon to the National Assembly.”*

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the President of this country has no authority in this National Assembly, and no constitutional power to mandate anybody to set up a Committee in this Assembly. That is a Constitutional position. It is very alarming to hear the Hon. Member, such a long standing Member of this legislature and who knows the rules and who understands the Constitutional position. I am alarmed to hear him come and tell us that.

However, Mr. Speaker, I do not think that this Administration is serious. We have a serious crisis in this country. We have floods which are devastating the lives of the farmers and other people and bringing in their wake diseases – water-borne and other diseases. I see the Government has decided to deal with floods by handing out cutlasses and files, I suppose the objective is to use these implements to cut out the floods.

Mr. Speaker, we have an alarming HIV/AIDS epidemic, or so we are told by the medical people, we have a high rate of unemployment, we have spawning homelessness, we have violent crimes escalating and we have street families. Mr. Speaker, we have critical territorial issues, we have chaos in our streets, we have all kinds of economic problems in the various sectors and the Government comes here not to debate any of these issues, but to ask us to deal with holidays. This is trivializing the function of this Honourable House.

[Applause]

**Mr. Hoyte:** We are not going to have any part of it. If the Government wants, they can go ahead all by themselves and set up all the Committees and institute all the holidays they want, but don't involve the People's National Congress in trivial matters.

[Applause]

## Motion on the Approval of Financial Paper No. 2 for 2000: 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2000

*“BE IT RESOLVED:*

*That this Assembly approve of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2/2000 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$947,826,408, for the period ended 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2000 – Advance made from the Contingencies fund.”*

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Chairman, Item 1, Chart of Accounts Nos. 161 and 184 – can the Hon. Minister explain how the Government could have the presumption to ask this Honourable House to vote monies in respect of a project that has not been even brought to this House? Hon. Members of this House do not know what this BEAL investment is, and yet they are being asked to vote substantial millions of dollars to pay for meals and travelling to the North West District in connection with this investment.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask either of these sums and particularly the sum opposite No. 184 which involves an amount for the payment of a Mr. Paul Ritchler, who enjoys a happy, and unique position, according to the Government, of working both for the Government and for the BEAL investors. If we could get answers for those questions Mr. Chairman, I would be very happy.

## **Motion on the Approval of Financial Paper No. 5 for 2000: 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2000**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Chairman, may I ask the Honourable Minister precisely what activities are being financed by Items 123, 131 and 161? Because when this matter first became public, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Agriculture said it was not a serious outbreak. I had said shortly before, that I had information that these locusts were devastating people's crops. The response was that it was not serious, but obviously it is a serious matter, because we are being asked to vote substantial sums to deal with the matter. Not that we on this side of the House, begrudge this expenditure, we think it necessary, but we'd like to know precisely what the Programme is and what is being financed?



**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE EIGHTH  
PARLIAMENT OF THE CO-OPERATIVE  
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA**



## Motion on the Approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for 2001 - Budget Debate: 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2001

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, we are here once again to indulge in the annual ritual. Every year, we get a new Budget, but in reality, it is the same thing. The words are paraphrased and you get different numbers, but what is called a Budget remains substantially a document of obfuscation. It is not enlightening, it tells you nothing.

You know, Mr. Speaker, last year, the Government commissioned a Report, it was one by a World Bank Team and the name of the Report is **'Re-orienting Public Expenditure to Serve the Poor.'**

The Government suppressed this Report. They dared not publish it last year or the early part of this year, because it would have contradicted everything they said in their election campaign and it contradicts everything that is being said from the Government benches in the course of this debate, in particular, it contradicts severely all with flights of imagination of the Hon. Minister of Health.

Listening to him, one gets the impression of a country where the health services are very good, they are all very healthy and we are all involved in enjoying pretty high standards of health care.

Mr. Speaker, let me deal first of all with the Budget, in the document I referred to some attention is paid to the Budget, the way it is put together and what it achieves, and I would like to refer to page 11 of that report in which the following assertion is made:

*"The Budget is the primary mechanism available to the Government to signal its policy intentions to investors, to the public and to its own staff."*

That is why when the Hon. Member, Mr. Chandarpaul was saying that the Budget cannot contain everything and so on, I was a little startled, because the Budget is the map. It is the signpost, it signals Government's policies and the way the Government is going to get about implementing these policies. Then this document went on to say, talking about the Guyana Budget, the Budget of the PPP regime that the weaknesses in the Guyana Budget process have been identified in successive public expenditure revenues by the World Bank, even in the NDS. The Budget is developed without sectorial objectives or priorities, provides no opportunity for Government to assess the Programmes against the existing ones, and is subject to arbitrary adjustment formulation and execution.

That is the primary criticism I wish to make about the Budget.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, what we get is a jumbled set of ideas, no coherence, no clear indication as to how objectives are going to be met and certainly no indications of inter-sectorial linkages and coordination.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister said that the Budget had certain objectives, they are stated in many different ways, but they all add up to the same thing in the end. It is to move this country forward, it is to breathe in a good society, in which we are all happy and prosperous and it is to develop the infrastructure to provide us all with a good life. But the problem is that the Hon. Minister proceeds on assumptions that are unreal, untrue and unsubstantiated.

The Government is in denial mode, because the realities are not in accordance with what formed the foundation of the Budget's exceptions.

Mr. Speaker, what are these realities? On page 18 of the Budget Statement, the Minister said that in spite of all the difficulties in 2000, the Government was able to realize success in the implementation of policies and Programmes. It is interesting to know what this success is. The economy continues to be in a state of sharp decline as my colleague the Hon. Member, Mr. Winston Murray, pointed out. You look at what is happening with the rate of growth and you see a troubling picture with the economy plunging steeply from 7.9 percent in 1996 to 6.2 in 1997 which in itself ought to raise alarm bells, to just 1.8 percent in 1998, allegedly to 3 percent in 1999, which nobody believes, and in 2000 again, a negative growth.

That is not a one-off problem in the economy, that is something systematic, and if the Government gets itself entrapped in a denial mode and keeps saying, *"well, oh, political problems, people objected to the election results, people are marching and those are the reasons,"* this Government is never going to be able to come to grips with fundamental issues affecting our country.

The Government would have known, Mr. Speaker, that it did not qualify for HICP assistance. It did not meet the benchmark and the programme targets, but said that the people who control the HIPC resources took a political decision. What people might say, a humanitarian decision, but it was political not to allow the effort to fail in this country.

I will tell you that I know all the reasons for this political decision, but they decided that notwithstanding the failure of the Government to meet the programme targets, they would give debt relief. So the Government knows that the economy was not performing and that there were serious structural and other differences or difficulties which had to be addressed.

We heard in the Budget Speech, Mr. Speaker, about all the wonderful infrastructure work that was done. We are told that infrastructures have been improved and millions of dollars have been spent. Let us assume the accuracy in the number of millions of dollars, the fact remains that the infrastructure of this country has not been significantly affected for the better. This same report commissioned by the Government makes the point that drainage and irrigation, sea defences, roads, all of these areas are in decay, are in serious difficulties. When you learn to read, you will understand what I am talking about because I will lend you the Report.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me read so that they can understand, not Hoyte says this, not the PNC says this, it is the technical team brought in by the Government, which had access to Government records and which in the normal way would have had discussions with Government Officials:

*“Frequent breaches to sea defences pose a major risk to settlements and economic activities. The road network is not maintained adequately. Flooding threatens the economic development of some of the most productive regions in the country.”*

You heard the Minister talking about how many drainage and irrigation canals were built and all of that. He even said that they built at Buxton and Enmore and even now as I speak, people are up to their knees in flood water, because the reports are not true. Well, my dear Colleague through the Hon. Speaker, the purpose of the system is to cope with the heavy rains, so that areas would not be flooded. It is not to provide an opportunity for people to skim off public funds and put them in their pockets or in the pockets of their relatives by blood or by marriage.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other references in this book here about the bad state and lack of maintenance of infrastructure in the country, but what is important is what do you get from the money that you spent? It is a point that we make all the time from these benches, and it is reinforced by the World Bank document. It says:

*“Both the Government and donors can see that many projects while apparently well designed fail to disburse or achieve their intended objective in the cost effective manner.”*

These concerns have intensified recently because of weak economic growth during the last two years and because the HIPC Initiative. Now there is an implied criticism in this report about the HIPC Initiative because that HIPC Initiative puts pressure on the Government to divert money to the social sectors at the expense of infrastructure, at the expense of those parts of the economy, which would stimulate real growth and development.

Mr. Speaker, it is no use remaining in this state of denial. What I am saying here is that when we look objectively at our situation, we find that we are in deep economic trouble, but the Government benches do not accept this. They believe we are doing well but there is no sector in which we are doing well.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Xavier, got up here with remarkable courage and said that there is no corruption in his Ministry, and the Tender Board Procedures are fair and honest, and I believe, he is the only person in Guyana who believes that.

Every year, the Auditor-General complains about the process, up to the last Auditor-General's Report, he complained about his inability even to

track the due regularity of the Tender board Procedures and complained about the various assurances he was given, that the Government had reformed the Tender Board Procedures, but up to now it hasn't happened and he said almost in despair, it doesn't matter how well designed the Government's policies might be, how well intentioned, how beautifully crafted, from a technical point of view, nothing is going to happen until Government is able to restore the morale and the professional confidence of the Public Service. No Government will be successful if the Public Service is in disarray and demoralized and we have a Public Service which is in disarray and which is demoralized.

The Hon. Minister of the Public Service boasted about the pay of Public Servants. She said the Government moved the minimum wage to \$19,000 per month. Mr. Speaker, in this very Public Building, there are Government employees who are getting less than that. So where is the correlation between what the Government says and puts out as it propaganda and the reality?

Now, we have to do something about the Public Service, we have to treat with the Public Service, we have to establish a proper relationship with the Public Service and there can be no doubt in anybody's mind that the Public Service needs to be modernised, but in that modernization process, the Public Servants themselves have to play a key role.

I know that the Government has been tinkering with Public Service Reform, there is a concept paper in Public Service modernization, there is the application to the IDB for a loan, but the fact remains, it doesn't matter how many technical people you can bring in from abroad, it doesn't matter how many experts you bring in, you are not going to be successful with Public Service Reform until the principal stakeholders in this country participate with the Government in identifying the problems and agreeing on the nature of the reform. The World Bank itself in a Report in 1999, examined some of these Reform Programmes and concluded that thirty-three percent of them failed absolutely, and of the other which appeared to succeed, they were not sustained. One of the conclusions is that there was not a sufficient local involvement or to use the buzz-word which is so popular among these technicians, the ownership of the process was not in the hands of the local people. So, I am saying, it is useless to continue pretending that all is well, that the economy is in good shape, that our agencies and institutions are in good shape, and all the things that are necessary to sustain an economy and propel it to growth are functioning well. That is just not true.

Mr. Speaker, the economy is being sustained by grants and foreign inflows. Without those grants and foreign inflows, the economy would be in a parlous state. I was about to say collapsed, but I don't believe that myself. Unless the Government is able to attract substantial grant money, it is not going to be able to fund public expenditure at any reasonable level. It is not going to be able to do that and therefore, what the Government

should be concentrating now on, is how so we put this economy in proper shape. It is not use bleating and whining about globalization and trade liberalization, those are facts of life and I heard the Hon. Minister, Mr. Rohee saying that, *"Oh! Here is a sugar protocol, these are legal documents and you get all kinds of wonderful things out of these legal documents."* Well, I would have thought that he was around long enough to understand that in the final analysis, what moves things in the internal sphere is politics.

On the matter of international rules, you see what happened, for example, with Kyoto and the Americans. There is a book I read called *The Imperial Economy* by a man named Robert Karo, and his thesis was very simple. The 'Imperial Economy' he was talking about was the American economy and what he was saying is that America is so powerful that she makes the rules and she breaks them when it suits her purpose.

I want to tell Mr. Rohee a story from my own experience, when I was ACP spokesman for sugar. Every year, we went to Brussels to negotiate the sugar price under the Sugar Protocol. The fact of the matter is that there was no negotiation, although the Protocol said the price should be negotiated every year, taking into account the relevant economic factors. The European Union gave a price to the ACP countries and I remember in 1982, I think it was or thereabouts, when the ACP countries decided that things can't go on, because in that particular year there had been steep rate increases which had trenched into their expected profits. So there was this big argument when these two committees met. They weren't getting any place, so it was suggested that two Chairmen and one adviser would meet privately in a room. The two Chairmen were myself and the European Chairman, who was a man named Dhal Sagar, and my Technical Adviser was Mr. Edwin Carrington, who was at that time the Deputy Secretary-General for the ACP. When we got into this room: I started off by saying, *"this Protocol says that we should negotiate prices every year, but you people don't negotiate. You just give us a price,"* and he laughed very cynically.

He said, *"you know the Protocol is in English and it is in French"*. I said, *"yes"*, and he then said that both versions are equally valid. I said *"yes"*. He said, *"It might well be that French word 'negotiate' might have a different meaning from the English word 'negotiate'."*

Well, having delivered himself of that joke or criticism, call it what you will, he then said in a serious vein, *"Look Mr. Hoyte, we have given our farmers a four percent increase, and we can't give you more."*

Straight political consideration has nothing to do with that Protocol and what it says about negotiating and taking into account economic factors. As a far as I know, the Europeans never look into account freight rates in attempting to arrive at sugar prices. So, the point I want to make to the Hon. Member and persons on that side, is that, you have the theory of things but you also have to understand the practicality of world affairs. That is why, we need to strengthen our diplomatic missions, strengthen our foreign Ministry and have highly trained competent people heading

these agencies and looking after our interests, because in the final analysis politics is going to be a determining factor in decisions which are going to be made. You will find that despite all the agreements, certain countries will get a preference over other countries because they have made the political connection and do the political work.

Mr. Speaker, we are facing a very difficult situation where everybody has said that the Budget Speech unfortunately says nothing about how we are going to deal with these issues which the Minister himself raised – WTO, globalization, CARICOM, the Common Market and the single economy. It is not sufficient to indicate that these things are going to happen. How are we gearing ourselves to meet the challenge? What are we doing first of all in terms of our own internal organisation? What are we doing in terms of organising the economy in the new dispensation?

The criticism that was inherent in the point I made earlier was that it is not sufficient for the Minister to say that he is going to do a number of things to move this country forward. He is going to restructure traditional industries, but he doesn't say how. He talks about sugar and a brief reference to bauxite, that is not the investment in sugar, all the investments in bauxite, that is not the issue, that is tinkering with the problem. How are you going to modernize the economy, place it on a modern basis so that you get the maximum value added from the economic use of the assets that we have? Where are the proposals for encouraging and stimulating downstream industries? For example, where are the proposals for linkages between agriculture and manufacturing? Where are the proposals for agri-business? Where are the proposals for marketing agencies, which ensure that whatever we produce finds a market both locally and externally?

We are told that there is a five-year plan. What I would say, Mr. Speaker is that is the best kept secret in Guyana and it is not easy to keep a secret in Guyana, because a secret is something everybody knows.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, ultimately there are some things we have to do:

We have to design a coherent macroeconomic policy.

We have to let people know what are the broad objectives and goals of economic policy.

Where is it we are going and what is it we want to do with this economy as a whole?

You need in our circumstances to finalise the Investment Code. For years, you look at every IMF document, the Government says it is going to have an Investment Code. USAID finances a project, there is an Investment Code. It is not happening and it is sending a bad signal to the would-be investors. It doesn't matter how peaceful a climate you have, if you don't have in place the rules to give an investor a sense of comfort and an understanding that he is playing on a level playing turf, well then you are not going to get investments. We have ultimately to create a climate of governance in which not only the foreigner coming here, but particularly every Guyanese can feel secure. The only way every Guyanese is going to feel secure is if he or she has a stake in this economy.

[Applause]

### **Housing:**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Now, he did talk, Mr. Speaker, about housing and the number of house lots distributed. I want to say that that is really a fiction. The question is not the house lots, the question is houses, roofs over people's heads. So that the Hon. Member could spend all his time until doomsday giving out house lots to people who can't build any house, our situation would remain the same or even worst.

I want to challenge the Minister, not merely to give out house lots but to give people title to the land. I am inclined to the view of the Argentinian economist, De Soto, that for countries like ours, if you really want to move forward, and to move forward in a sustained rapid way, you have to give people property, you have to give them property rights, you have to give them that stake -

[**Interruption:** That's why you didn't do it.]

**Mr. Hoyte:** No, I didn't do it, because you know, we were busy admiring you.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Now ultimately, Mr. Speaker, we need investment, we have not been getting investment and we can argue from now until doomsday as to why not. What is important is devising a policy that would attract investments. That calls again for the involvement of major stakeholders, because the future growth and development of this country is something which affects us all.

I do not believe that at this stage, you will have many differences of opinion on the need to attract investment or the need to develop our economy, and therefore there would be no good reason why we cannot

forge a national consensus on some of the things that we need to do, and to do immediately.

**[Applause]**

### **Dialogue:**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, we have almost surreptitiously, imperceptibly, reached a significant stage in the political evolution of our country and I refer to the on-going talks between President Jagdeo and the Leader of the PNC/Reform and the Leader of the Opposition. The strength of those talks lies in their informality. That is where the strength lies. That there is not formality about the thing with hundreds of advisers, photographers all over the place and I personally believe that the significance of the start of those talks is going to dawn upon people not too far from now. I am not a wild optimist, I am a cautious man. I believe, however, as the saying goes, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, the success of these talks will depend upon what results they bring about and I am satisfied, in my own mind that clearly the talks have been good – fruitful. They promise a great deal.

**[Applause]**

**Mr. Hoyte:** Things have happened. The various Committees have worked and as far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, the agenda for these talks can never be closed. The agenda is an open agenda and I suspect that as the days go by, the talks can burgeon into an arrangement which involves other players, but which does not lose the strength of the informality which I have referred to.

We have had a long debate, many things have been said, many claims have been made and many counter-claims made, many extravagant things said and denied, but, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, I believe, that most of the people have nowhere else to go. They belong to here and they are going to die here. So I would say that the duty to keep it intact devolves on all of us. That duty is not going to be discharged by pointing fingers and making allegations and writing letters to the press as to who did what and when. Since my good friend and Colleague, Mr. Carberry, made so many references to the bible, it has crossed my mind at this point, what is it? We all have sinned and come in need of the Glory of God.

Mr. Speaker, I believe, that we have an opportunity for a fresh beginning, a fresh start. All I say, let us seize the opportunity.

**[Applause]**

# Motion on the Second Reading of the Medical Practitioners (Amendment) Bill 2001 – Bill No. 13/2001: 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2001

*“A Bill intituled:*

*An Act to amend the Medical Practitioners Act 1991.”*

[The Minister of Health]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Speaker, the French have a saying ‘*rapportons notre feuille*,’ meaning literally let us return to our sheet. This means that when there is a discussion and we stray far away from the subject, we should return to the nub of the matter.

The Hon. Minister said that this is a simple Bill and, indeed, it is, but I would caution him in the words of A.N. Whitehead, an English philosopher: “*seek implicitly and distrust him.*”

We are not opposed to this Bill, it is well-known, Mr. Speaker, that there has not been the friendliest relations between recent Ministers of Health and the medical profession. There have been many unseemly rows ending up to many Court actions. As a matter of fact there are some Court actions still pending, and I think it is time that we bring an end to this dispute by having in place legislation acceptable to all sides which enable the Minister and his staff to focus on policy and matters of interest and importance to the people of this country.

It is for this reason that I will concentrate upon the Bill, because if the Bill stands not, it will become a fruitful source of continued legislation.

I want to draw attention to some of the problems which are inherent in the Bill as outlined in our proposal that we sent to the Select Committee, which in my judgment means that the Bill need not require more than two sittings at most, to refine and elucidate some aspects so that we can proceed to have this Bill passed next week. Having placed arrangements, as I said, this would put an end to unseemly disputes.

Mr. Speaker, in Clause 2 of the Bill, the proviso to paragraph (ii), the Minister seems to accept that there is not council legally accepted in force and therefore he cannot consult such a council prior to the passing of regulations, and so the draftsman has attempted to deal with this reality by saying that he shall be deemed to have consulted with the council. That is all well and good.

The only problem with this is the way this proviso has been drafted. The Minister shall be deemed to have consulted with the council not merely with respect to the first elections, but for succeeding elections. Therefore, this section here – this proviso – will have to be amended to make it very clear that the deeming aspect refers only to the first election, but thereafter, once the council is established the Minister shall consult with the council.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Clause 3 of the Bill refers to the power to make regulations, provided that *“the member of a council, however constituted, shall vacate office when a new council is constituted and Members thereof enter upon the duties of their office.”*

Now, the phrase *“however constituted”*, makes no sense because on the one hand in Clause 2, the Minister is conceding that there is no council legally constituted, and there in Clause 3 he seems to be saying that there is a possibility that you have a council which, somehow or the other, has some kind of powers. Our proposal is that the inelegance be deleted so that there could be no doubt about the legal position is with respect to the councils.

There is also, Mr. Speaker, a need for consistency. Clause 4 refers to medical practitioners, when I think that the standard form is duly ‘registered medical practitioners’, and out of abundant caution I would urge that that simple formula be used so that nobody goes to the Court to distinguish between a duly registered practitioner and some practitioner who has not been registered, but who asserts a right maybe to be elected to the council.

Mr. Speaker, Clause 4, regarding the appointment of lay members: in that Clause it is provided that the Minister should seek the approval of the President. Now that is, in my judgment, unwise, unnecessary and undesirable. It is either that the Minister appoints or the President appoints. There is little precedent for a situation where a Minister bothers the President with respect to matters which fall within his jurisdiction. I would urge that we do not put in our legislation this kind of inelegant formulation that the Minister asserts his responsibility to name the lay members to the council.

Now, Clause 4 again Mr. Speaker, I think there is provision for an interim council. From the way the legislation is structured, there could never be a situation when there is no council, because what this Bill says, what the Act will say, is that once a council is instituted or constituted it remains in office until the succeeding council enters upon its function. So a council never goes out of office, as this Bill is saying – its life never comes to an end until a succeeding council enters upon its functions.

Those are some of the matters, Mr. Speaker, which we would urge that we sit down and iron out, lest we find ourselves passing a bit of legislation and ending up into trouble again.

The Hon. Member will know, his predecessor certainly does, the lawyers have fertile minds and they are not going to allow ambiguities to escape unchallenged.

Now, a few other matters – I hope that that Minister has his regulations in draft, because he has only sixty days after the council is constituted to promulgate his regulation and certainly one would want to have a situation where that period elapses, the regulations aren’t there and somebody runs to the Court again.

The other matter has to do with the transitional arrangements. Now, as I said, this whole Bill is based upon the premise that there is no legal council, but in fact there has been a body which has been registering doctors, which has even been attempting to discipline doctors. Those things have happened and it seems to me that we ought to have a validating Clause here which says that those registrations shall be deemed to be valid; otherwise we are going to have a very serious problem coming upon us.

Finally, between now, and since there is no council, whenever the Minister promulgates the regulations there is a hiatus, there is nothing, there is no council, we are still in the same position and I would suggest that some temporary transitional provisions be made to deal with who comes up now to be registered or to make their complaints or to have their matter dealt with by what should be a council.

The Regulations have to make provision for elections and this is just a suggestion that, maybe, the Minister might consider asking the Chairman of the Elections Commission or the Chief Elections Officer to put in place some set of arrangements which would enable the elections to proceed smoothly.

In those circumstances, Mr. Speaker, we don't oppose the Bill as such, we are saying that there are some defects, there are some ambiguities which are likely to cause problems and we would suggest that the matter be referred to a Select Committee. That Committee could meet urgently – Monday, Tuesday – my own view is that it wouldn't take more than two meetings for these matters to be ironed out and the Bill be read for a third time on Thursday of next week. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**[Applause]**

## Motion on the Approval of Financial Paper No. 3/ 2001: 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2001

**Mr. Hoyte:** Item No. 12, **Subhead 45012** – could the Hon. Minister say whether this amount requested represents the total market value of the land to be acquired? If not, what is the total market value? If that answer is not available, would he explain why he has not come to this National Assembly for the total market value?

Finally, assuming he has a total market value, would he explain how he arrived at that figure?

[**The Chairman:** Thank you, Hon., Member.]

[**Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar:** Mr. Chairman, at the moment this is the price offered by the Government. Whether it is a market value or not, that would be determined by the Court. The matter is in Court at the moment and if there is a requirement that we have to vote more then we will come back to Parliament.]

[**The Chairman:** Any other questions from the Hon. Member, Mr. Hoyte?]

**Mr. Hoyte:** Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member knows he can't fog me off with an answer like that. It is not the Court. The Court has to determine the market value when the owner of the property disputes the value which the Government has arrived at and applies to the Court, but under the law the Government has to offer the market value for the properties they are about to acquire. I am now asking, what is that market value? If the Hon. Member is saying that the Government hasn't got a market value, well then, this number here of \$50 million has been snatched out of the skies. It is not based on any logic or principle.

[**Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar:** Mr. Chairman, the records will show that the acquisition cost of that land by Mr. Toolsie Persaud is \$2.7 million and this offer is over twenty times that value at the present time.]



























