

JANET JAGAN, O.E.
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEECHES
VOLUME 2

**The Third - Seventh Parliaments of the
Republic of Guyana
1976-1998**

Janet Jagan, O.E.
National Assembly Speeches Volume 2
With a Preface by President Donald Ramotar
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PREFACE

Janet Jagan was an outstanding and remarkable woman, a great leader and played a central role in Guyanese and international affairs.

She was born in Chicago on the 20th October 1920. It was there that she met the young Cheddi Jagan, a dental student from British Guiana. They married and Janet followed her husband to the then colony in 1943.

What was significant is the fact that most people who migrated almost always go from a poor to a rich country. Janet moved from the richest country in the world to one of the poorest, and a colony at that.

On arrival in British Guiana she, together with her husband, plunged into the social and political life in her new homeland.

Early in 1946 she founded the Women's Political and Economic Organisation (WPEO) together with Ms. Frances Stafford and Winifred Gaskin. This gave expression to Janet's belief that women had to establish their equality with men.

Later that same year, on November 6th, 1946 she founded the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) together with Cheddi Jagan, Ashton Chase and Joslyn Hubbard.

The PAC was the forerunner to the People's Progressive Party (PPP), which was founded in January 1950. Janet was its first General Secretary and the first editor of its official organ, *Thunder*.

Janet Jagan dedicated herself totally to promoting the welfare and interests of the Guyanese people.

In her long distinguished career she led from the front. She was the first woman to contest elections in Guyana. In 1947 she contested for a seat in the legislative council and narrowly lost.

In 1951 she became the first woman to be elected a member of the Georgetown Town Council. In 1953, she was among the first women to be elected to Parliament; the other two were Jessie Burnham and Jane Phillips Gay. Janet became the Deputy Speaker of that Parliament. That made her the first female to hold that position.

That was a challenging period in our history. Janet Jagan faced many difficulties. The colonial power tried slandering her and eventually sent her to prison for her political activities.

Janet, however, was an extremely strong person. She faced those difficult years and fought heroically for the unity of the Party as she fought to defend the people.

In 1957, Janet became a Minister of the PPP Government. She held that position until 1961. Her stint as Minister of Labour, Health and Housing is still remembered to this day. She expanded health services to almost every part of our country. She began the housing drive and many schemes stand today as monuments to her labour of love.

In 1961 she stayed out of Government to concentrate on strengthening the Party. However, the struggle got very intense and after the death of Claude Christian, the then Minister of Home Affairs, Janet was put to replace him.

She resigned in protest because the police failed to inform her of the massacre that took place at Wismar. It was all a part of an international conspiracy to remove the PPP from office. Much of this has been documented and is now open due to the partial release of documents from the US State Department and the UK Foreign Office.

In the period 1964 to 1992 Janet worked hard to develop the Party's press. She edited the *Mirror* and *Thunder*. She did a lot in administration and headed the Party's International Committee.

She was a great humanitarian. She loved children greatly and wrote many books for them. She was an extraordinary kind person and very generous. Having had the good fortune of working closely with her, I can testify to her great kindness and concern for her comrades.

In 1997 after the passing of Cheddi Jagan, Janet was again thrown into the centre of things. She became Guyana's first female Prime Minister having replacing Cde. Samuel Hinds who was elevated to the Presidency.

She was our Party's Presidential Candidate for the 1997 elections and won our biggest victory in history. Her stint as President, however, did not last long. She demitted office on August 11, 1999 due to ill health.

However, in the period that she was President she withstood great pressures from an opposition that descended into the use of the most vile racism to attack her personally. She took it all and continued to work for the Guyanese people.

After leaving office she did a lot of work to promote culture. The collection now housed at Castellani House benefited greatly from her labour. She chaired the board until her passing.

Throughout her life she displayed great courage, determination and a powerful intellect. Those are the qualities she left us in the People's Progressive Party, the Party she served at its very leadership until March 28th, 2009.

She had to overcome a lot in her political life. In her personal life too she confronted many challenges. The fact that she was denied the right to return to the country of her birth, the US, to visit her sick father and could not go to attend his funeral must have been personally very painful to her.

Despite all of that she held no bitterness for all that she had to endure. At the time of her untimely passing she remained one of the most loved and respected personalities of our country.

It is not surprising that recently she was recognized by *Time* Magazine (March 2011) as one of the sixteen most rebellious women in human history.

Janet Jagan will always be remembered for her outstanding contribution to Guyana. These volumes of her speeches in Parliament are a very small part of her voluminous works as a journalist, a political activist and just a wonderful personality.

President Donald Ramotar

Biographical Summary of Janet Jagan

- Name:** Janet Jagan, nee Rosenberg
- Date of Birth:** October 20, 1920. Chicago, Illinois, USA.
Died March 28, 2009
- Personal :** Married August 5, 1943, to Dr Cheddi Jagan, has two children: Cheddi (Joey) and Nadira
- Education:** University of Detroit;
Wayne University;
Michigan State College;
Cook County School of Nursing

Political Career:

- 1950:** Co-founder and General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party.
- 1953:** Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly.
- 1957:** Minister of Labour, Health and Housing.
- 1963-4:** Minister of Home Affairs and Senator.
- 1973, 1980,
1985, 1992:** Re-elected to Parliament.
- October**
- 1992:** First Lady and Ambassador to the United Nations.
- March**
- 1997:** First female Prime Minister and Vice-President.
- December**
- 1997:** President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

Editor's Note on Janet Jagan

Janet Jagan was an outstanding and remarkable figure in both Guyanese and postwar anti-imperialist politics, who played a central role in the political life of her adopted country for more than sixty years.

Born in Chicago in 1920, Janet Jagan met and married her husband Dr. Cheddi Jagan whilst he was studying dentistry in the USA. Both were passionately committed to politics, and upon returning to British Guiana in the 1940s they became co-founders of the Political Affairs Committee which, in 1950, turned into the People's Progressive Party (PPP). Janet Jagan was appointed as both its first General Secretary and the editor of its journal *Thunder*. She also became the first woman to be elected to the Georgetown City Council, Guyana's first female Deputy Speaker, the first female Cabinet Minister under self-government, the first female Prime Minister and finally the nation's first female President after the PPP won the elections in December 1997. She resigned in 1999 due to ill health, and died in Georgetown Public Hospital on 28th March 2009.

These two volumes contain Janet Jagan's speeches made in the Legislative Assembly and Parliament during her lengthy political career. Although they have been compiled in chronological order, they do not contain a complete record of her extensive contribution to Guyanese politics as both the 1953 Official Reports and those for sittings held between 1975 and 1997 are currently unavailable. Nevertheless, the speeches that are reproduced here clearly demonstrate Janet Jagan's unswerving support and continuous fight for the rights of the nation's underprivileged people, whether it be in terms of housing, health, pensions, working conditions or the ongoing need for economic, social and political reform and development.

Janet Jagan entered the House of Assembly for the first time in 1953, when she was appointed Deputy Speaker. Together with her husband Dr. Cheddi Jagan, the poet Martin Carter and a number of other ministers and PPP members she became a political prisoner following the suspension of the Constitution by the British Government later that same year. When fresh elections were held in 1957 and the PPP returned to office, she was appointed Minister of Labour, Health and Housing. During 1963-64 she served as Minister of Home Affairs and Senator, but resigned her role as Home Affairs Minister when she was unable to control the police force that had not intervened when extreme acts of violence were committed by opposition henchmen. She was returned to Parliament at successive elections held in 1973, 1980, 1985 and 1992.

When her husband Dr. Cheddi Jagan was inaugurated as Executive President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana on 5th October 1992, Janet Jagan became First Lady and served for six months as Guyana's Ambassador to the United Nations. Following the death of her husband in March 1997,

Janet Jagan then became Prime Minister and then finally served as President following elections at the end of that same year.

In addition to her extensive parliamentary activities, Janet Jagan was editor of the *Mirror* newspaper for almost twenty-five years where she remained a relentless critic of the PNC government. She also wrote hundreds of articles on topics as diverse as The Iraq War, Yasser Arafat, Nuclear Power, Rising Crimes Against Women and Guantanamo Bay, to name but a few. Together with her lifelong political interests, Janet Jagan also believed passionately in the value of Guyanese literature and culture. She wrote and edited several books for children including *When Grandpa Cheddi was a Boy*; *The Dog Who Loved Flowers*; *The Lure of the Mermaid* and *Patricia the Baby Manatee*.

Janet Jagan received many awards during her lifetime, including the Woman of Achievement Award from the University of Guyana, the 1997 Gandhi Gold Medal for Peace, Democracy and Women's Rights from UNESCO and Guyana's highest honour the Order of Excellence (O.E.). She will be remembered as not only as the devoted wife of Dr. Cheddi Jagan, but also as a champion of human rights and a formidable political force in her own right.

Dr. Lynne Macedo
Yesu Persaud Centre for Caribbean Studies, University of Warwick

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Motion on the Approval of Financial Paper No. 5/ 1976: 29th November, 1976

Mrs. Jagan: I do not know if there is a mistake here. I cannot reconcile item 49, Head 15, - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Subhead 5 – Telephones, requesting \$267,600 for the establishment of a new Mission in Cuba and for increased cost of rentals of Overseas Missions. I also notice that item 54, Head 15, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Subhead 10, Rents, Rates and Insurance Premiums, also deals with much the same thing, "*Increased cost of rent for Embassies and staff quarters and additional accommodation for delegates to U.N. General Assembly.*"

I should like to make one small comment. From what I understand, the rentals that we are paying for members of our various Missions abroad in some cases are exceedingly high. It is true the Minister may argue that rents are high overseas, which may be so, but then again we have to take note of the standard of living and the life style which the members of Mission enjoy. I would expect that there would be a moderate standard of living for the members of the staff; the Embassy has to be elevated to a certain standard, but I believe we spend too much money in keeping up with the Joneses. A little state like Guyana does not have to keep up with the Joneses. If we spend moderately, live moderately, we will have far greater respect from the other countries and from the staffs of the Embassies of other countries and those in which they are located.

I wanted to say a few words under item 77, Head 19 – Ministry of Information and Culture, Subhead 13 – Operation and Maintenance of Motor Vehicles. I notice that the legend states: "*substantial increase in the cost of spare parts as well as increased operations.*" In looking over the supplementary provisions in the Schedule we have before us, seven Heads deal with this same question of operation and maintenance of vehicles. The seven Heads, if we add them up in the schedule, come to a total of \$1,132,000, which is certainly a considerable amount.

I think it was the Prime Minister who made some remarks to the effect that \$3 million is lost annually on the improper use of Government vehicles. I would like to draw the attention of this House to the fact that greater care must be taken of the Government's vehicles and I think there should be some specific programme because there is obviously such great loss going on because of the mishandling of vehicles. I can recall one day alone in passing through about a half of Georgetown I saw accidents involving three Government vehicles, one of them being from the Ministry of Information and Culture

They are talking about tightening belts. I think that if the Ministers in charge of each Permanent Secretary took some care to see that the vehicles and property in his Ministry are properly controlled and cared for, we might

be able to save some hard-earned money. I am sure that the spare parts called for in relation to this Paper are mainly spare parts required on account of the accidents and damages caused by poor handling.

Item 164, Subhead 19 – Mosquito Control Service: The legend says “*To meet additional cost of the emergency programme for anti-malaria operations in the interior an amount of \$200,000 has been advanced from the Contingencies Fund.*” I have not yet heard an explanation that I could properly understand as to why we have had this emergency. I know that when I was Minister of Health we had malaria completely under control particularly at the border areas of Brazil and Venezuela. We had careful surveillance to keep it under control. Perhaps there are some new developments. It is also possible that the Ministry of Health was slack in some of its operations. Perhaps the Minister can explain this.

I have looked over the Schedule of Supplementary Provisions under 165. We have previously gone through the Subhead under items No. 164 and 165 and on both occasions I have been amazed that I have not seen any amount brought forward by the Ministry of Health for drugs. We have a shortage of drugs in this country and I see everything that one can think of in this Schedule but not one cent is for drugs. Can the Minister say that there is no drug shortage? If I am not mistaken, I raised this on the last occasion and the Minister gave soothing replies but we come to the crunch and that is that someone is to be blamed.

I wanted to bring to his attention that particularly in the case of tuberculosis he has got to watch out. I would ask him if it is true that there is no streptomycin in the country. Now streptomycin is absolutely necessary for the control of tuberculosis, as he should know. I would ask him why such an essential drug is not in the country and what is the Minister doing to protect the health of our people.

Motion on the Second and Third Readings of the Nurses and Midwives Registration (Amendment) Bill 1976: 21st January, 1977

[**The Minister of Health:** A Bill Intituled:

"An Act to amend the Nurses and Midwives Registration Ordinances and to make consequential amendments to other laws."]

Mrs. Jagan: Comrade Speaker, I have wished that it would have been possible in the spirit of critical support to have given support to this Bill but on a careful examination of it, I am surprised and somewhat horrified at what lies beneath this Bill.

The Minister just now spoke about the sense of urgency. I sympathise with his sense of urgency because I have information which is reliable that the reason for this Bill being brought to this House stems from a matter which I wish I did not have to bring before this House, but, since it relates to this Bill intimately, I must bring it. It deals with the question of the General Nursing Council's right in connection with applications made for young women to enter nursing training, and it deals with the question of the interference of political big wigs into the affairs that really do not concern them.

In this particular matter which brought forward the Bill which we are talking about today, a young woman was pushed into training when she did not have the requirements for entering nursing. She could have used one of the three possibilities of entering nurses' training, that is, she could have taken the examination which she flatly refused to do: she had been to National Service and that was her only qualification for entering the nursing profession. She was offered the possibility of taking the regular examination which is set by the Ministry of Education and she refused because she had heavy political backing. This is a crying shame.

The Minister knows as well as I do that this is why the Government is now trying to fill the Nursing Council with appointees by the Minister, to take away from the General Nursing Council the right and privileges it has enjoyed and, I think, has used quite well through the years. We are going to now convert our nursing profession, which is so important to the well-being and welfare of this nation, into another political instrument, an instrument of political patronage.

For this reason I cannot support the Bill and I cry shame on those who have brought it forth. I am surprised that the Minister of Health, who has certain standards which I know he adheres to, has allowed himself to be used and to use such fine and technical and professional language to put before this House an instrument for politicising the nursing profession. We need in this country –

[Interruption]

[**The Speaker:** Comrades, please allow the Shadow Minister of Health to speak on the Bill.]

Mrs. Jagan: From our side of the House, we want to see the standard of the nursing profession improved. We have seen that the Government is planning to have a section of the University of Guyana training health workers and, I am sure, lifting nursing even above the standard it is today by having nursing move into the area of Degrees; we want women with Degrees in Nursing; we are making plans for this. You will have to start from the beginning. A woman entering nursing must have certain basic requirements; we know this. She cannot understand, appreciate or absorb the scientific aspects of nursing unless she has some basic scientific education. You cannot take a young woman with no understanding whatsoever of science or mathematics and expect her to become a good nurse. She needs certain basic requirements, and we all know that. You cannot be a good nurse unless you know something of anatomy, physiology, and bacteriology. A woman with no knowledge of the rudiments of bacteriology will do as I have seen nurses, who have not been properly trained, do for example, they will dip an injection needle into a solution of alcohol and pull it out and think that is it, not having the faintest idea of the length of time required to destroy the bacteria.

A woman who has no knowledge of mathematics will find it hard to understand the use of a thermometer, the use of blood pressure equipment, the requirements for dosage of medicine and the filling of injection syringes to the correct point etc. There is a certain basic knowledge. And, if you are going to send women into the nursing profession just because they have a P.N.C card or just because they have served a year's National Service, I say you are going to reduce the standard of nursing and you are going to be sorry. It should be our intention to improve the level of nursing and we should not make the nursing profession an instrument of political manoeuvring.

The Minister told us a few minutes ago that he would like flexibility for the Minister making the selections to the General Nursing Council; "*flexibility*" being the key word, flexibility to put in those who will bow to the wishes of the political big wigs who, for one reason or another, have people when they wish to enter nursing training, people who do not have the requirements or are unprepared to sit the examination. This is not good enough.

I understand that there are three levels of requirements for entering the nursing profession: first, the highest requirement is four G.C.E. subjects including English; the other is a Certificate at the C.P. and the other is to take an examination set by the Ministry of Education. In selection of nurses, it is not only what I have mentioned earlier – the academic qualifications

required – it is not only the need for understanding science, having basic mathematics, but there is also an attitude to work that is the key to successful or unsuccessful nursing. Nursing is a profession. It is not like a stenographer; it is not like needle work; it is something very special. It requires women who first of all have an aptitude for nursing. Agreed, that a woman can develop an aptitude if she has the possibilities but even more than the aptitude, I would say it requires a certain outlook on life, a quality which is not exactly easy to express but let us call it a humanitarian streak, an understanding of what it means to want to help suffering humanity. Without a certain quality in any medical worker of wishing to help people in distress, we cannot have a professional attitude.

The Minister has earlier discussed what unfortunately exists: the shopkeepers' attitude of many of our professional men who put money ahead of service. In nursing, a woman has to be prepared not to be a robot who merely learns to give injection and pass out medicines and put a bed in order and give the patient his bed bath and so on. It requires just that extra quality more that cannot be found except by interview and association. That is why many nursing schools have a period of probation after the entrance of the girl into nurses' training, to determine if the woman really can become a useful member of the community in the nursing profession. As the Minister must know from his own experience, not every woman can make a good nurse. It requires a lot more. It is not just being able to fulfil the visible requirements of the profession but it is the extra interest that a woman must put in to become a good nurse: it is her understanding and her attitude to life.

Also, if we are going to raise nursing to the degree level, we have to have women who are prepared not to stop leaning when they get their Certificate of Nursing but are prepared to learn more because nursing, like all aspects of medicine, moves, develops, change from month to month, from year to year and there is a lot of literature and a lot of new techniques and things that have to be kept up with. So, how are we going to get these women? By having the politicians pushing their favourites, pushing those who for one reason or the other, at the political level, deserve a reward, what we call "*political patronage*"? I am afraid this is what this Bill is all about and I think that it will not help this country.

I wanted, too, to refer to another aspect of the nursing profession which is going to lead us to all sorts of problems. It is also going to restrict the number of women entering this profession. It is the requirement that women who entering training for nursing must sign a form that they also agree to do National Service. I think this is a disgraceful requirement and it should be removed. It is a compulsion; it is a form of coercion and it also is wrong in the total sense of what you are trying to create.

A woman who goes into the nursing profession, by the very nature of her work is working with people, seeing their suffering; helping them to be more comfortable, helping them to get well. A real nurse with good train-

ing will have a relationship with her patients that goes beyond many of the problems of our country which those who advocate National Service explain will be overcome: the question of race and religion. A nurse worth her salt never looks at any patient with eyes that see anything but the patient and his problems. These eyes do not see differences of race and religion. A good nurse, properly trained, will have a community attitude and she needs not go into National Service to learn anything. In fact, I do not think there is anything she would learn. I think a properly trained nurse might be able to teach a number of them coming out of National Service.

I say that the requirement for women to be forced to sign that they will do National Service when they make application into nursing training is wrong and it is going to mean that many whom you would want to have in your nursing profession will not enter nurses' training under those conditions.

This is a fact of life and perhaps this is what those who are the architects of this Bill want. Maybe they want a nursing profession which will be robots to the political big wigs. Maybe that is what they want. If they want it, they themselves will regret it when they find themselves in the hospital hoping for good service. They will be the first to regret it. Do not say that we have not warned you that this Bill, and the requirement, the compulsion, to sign is going to bring the nursing profession down. All your highfalutin statements that you are trying to raise the nursing profession do not mean a thing in the face of the harsh reality of what we have before us.

I notice the Minister, in speaking about the Bill, spoke about the existing General Nursing Council, how it is formulated, and he said that this will give the professional nurses and midwives a majority they did not know about. Perhaps each of us has different information but my information is that the professional nurses and midwives who sit on the General Nursing Council are elected to the General Nursing Council by balloting which is conducted by two civil servants from the Ministry of Health, so I do not know that the election of nurses and midwives is something new you are introducing. It exists. That is my understanding. It is conducted by the very Ministry of Health, so I do not know what the Minister has to say about that.

The Minister has told us that the intention of this Bill is to improve the measure of guidance and the direction and planning affecting nurses and midwives in this Republic and my answer is that it will not improve the measures of guidance and the direction and planning affecting nursing, but it will remove it.

I have referred to the incident that has caused this Bill to come forward by trying to push in persons without qualifications. May I remind this House of the danger of this policy. Right now at the University of Guyana medical workers in radiography are being trained. I understand they are required to have an "O" Level in physics in order to be able to understand the teaching of general physics and X-ray physics. I understand that, using

the same methods I have spoken about, out of six students four do not have their "O" Level in physics, so how are they going to understand the principles of radiography? How can they be good radiographers? In the same way I am talking about nurses, the -

[The Speaker: That is going outside the relevance of this Bill.]

Mrs. Jagan: I am referring to the dropping of standards.

[The Speaker: Let us deal with the dropping of nursing standards in so far as this Bill is concerned.]

Mrs. Jagan: All right, if that is what you want. When we reduce these standards young women, without any basic education that will permit them to understand what they are supposed to know as good nurses, will end up perhaps no better off than Nurse Aids. I do not know if we want nurses' aides as we want professional nurses. I can't say that is for the Minister to decide, because I think this is a problem that concerns everyone in Guyana. It may be that some of our methods of training are not good enough. It maybe that we are not instilling in the nurses all that is required.

I agree with the Minister that you do have a problem concerning the training of nurses and midwives who will be prepared to go back to the areas from which they have come. I know when I was in the Ministry of Health I introduced a programme of bringing young women from the various interior areas of Guyana to Georgetown for training so that they would return to their own areas. I agree that many of them, when they come to the city and get adjusted to city life with its various amenities - cinemas, restaurants, electricity and running water, do not want to go back to the Amerindian settlements from which they come or the river areas. Some of them will go back. Perhaps it has to do with our training techniques. Maybe we have to rethink training, especially for those who must go back into the riverain, interior and rural areas of our country. It may mean that we have to look into this.

I would agree with the Minister on one aspect of his discussion about the formation of the Nursing Council, that the aspect of regionalism has been left out. Yes. It would be good to have representations of nurses, professional people, from areas of the country. But I think that also could be worked out by having requirements of membership on the Council from different areas, interior, riverain, rural and so on. That is the only point on which I agree that there is weakness in the present setup.

I would urge that the Minister give deeper consideration to this Bill and not lead us into greater problems than those we already have. He should not allow himself and those that will come to be used for political manipulation of the nursing profession. Let the nursing profession remain a profession of men and women whose basic motivation is to care of the sick,

who can have, as we would hope, ideological education. They would lift their ideological understanding and understand what is required of them in a country that is moving in an anti-imperialist direction. I do not want the Minister to confuse what I say of criticizing the nursing profession with something entirely different, which is the raising of the ideological understanding of nurses. I would suggest that the nurses' training course should have lectures and studies of an ideological content and an examination on how the medical services work within a socialist framework

Motion on the Approval of Financial Paper No. 1/ 1977: 21st July, 1977

Mrs. Jagan: Page 39, item 107 Subhead 27 – Entertainment Allowance, to provide for the payment of Entertainment Allowance to two (2) Supernumerary Permanent Secretaries: The amount provided in the Estimate was \$2,400. Now we are asking for \$4,800. I notice that in last year's Revised Estimate it went up to \$3,800. The original estimate was \$2,400. I had the impression, when I heard the Finance Minister read his Budget Speech, that this was supposed to be austerity year.

I know the other side of the House might say that it is a small amount; they might say what is \$4,800? But I must look at it differently when I see the tightening up of expenditure on essentials within the Ministry of Health and the free-handed way they spend on things like entertainment. That same amount can easily provide the midwife at Hackney on the Pomeroon with a new boat. Instead, it is going to be thrown away on Entertainment Allowance. I don't like to look back to the past too much but I was Minister of Health for four years. I am sure if you look up the records you will find that we did not spend that much on entertainment for the whole four years. We can cut down on entertainment if there is the will to do it. If this is austerity year, I will say cut out all the frills and try to give examples of thrift if you want to go all the way down the line. This whole Financial Paper, unfortunately, has many things that are not needed and anyone on the outside knows that there are cries over and over for many essentials. Therefore I would suggest that you delete this amount.

Item 123: The sum of \$10,000 was the Voted Provision for the Amerindian Residence and Hostel in Georgetown. Quite a number of Amerindians from all parts of the country use the hostel for sleeping but they are not provided with pillow cases. There are beds and I should imagine that pillow cases and sheets would come into the category of amenities.

I would like also to make reference to the fact that I was rather surprised to hear the Minister say – someone correct me if I am wrong – that meals at the Amerindian Hostel cost \$2.50 per meal and even at that price those who partake of those meals say that the quantity is much too small. I should imagine that there would be some form of subsidy at the hostel because you can go to any restaurant and get a meal at that price. At least at the hostel one would imagine that it would be cheaper and that it would provide a large enough meal to satisfy the appetites of the people using the service. But there are many complains that this is not so.

I think, too, that the toilet facilities are not being properly maintained and I would like the Minister concerned to look into it and see that all possible care is given in the maintenance of these hostels because the hostel is the only place where visitors from the interior who come to Georgetown can board and lodge. I think that it should be our duty to take care of them properly.

Motion on the Approval of Estimates of Expenditure for 1978 In Committee of Supply: 7th March, 1978

Mrs. Jagan: I do not know who the sixteen doctors whose contracts have ended are. The question of rapacious doctors, to answer you, Cde. Chairman, is one which requires supervision. I do not wish to refer to my period in office, but I did manage to supervise and prevent doctors from being rapacious.

We need a lot of nurses. Nurses are invaluable to the manning of our health services. During last year, the nurses had severe complaints to make about the quality of food they were being given. Efforts have been made to solve it. I do not know if it is a permanent solution but there are other problems and I would urge the Minister of Health to look into the question of transportation for nurses. We have nurses who have to move to and from the hospital in dark hours, whether it is morning when it is still dark or night, and some of our women have been attacked in one way or another. They must be protected. Many of the Government Services provide transportation and I think in this case it is absolutely necessary that our nurses who have to come out on duty or off duty during periods of darkness must be given facilities. It is not right to expect them to grab a taxi outside of the hospital. Even that would be a danger and very expensive besides. We must work out a system of holding our nurses here by giving them facilities. A nurse also wants to work under good conditions. If she is working under conditions that are suitable, she would give her best. I would also like to comment on the fact that we are bound to lose a very large number of women, who would be willing to go into nursing or training, by instituting the requirement for National Service. This is preventing many women, who would make very good nurses, from applying and from being willing to enter nursing because of this condition.

I may say, too, that there are frequent changes of Ministers in the Ministry, of course, this is a political issue, it concerns the P.N.C. It is not my business. But I would mention that there are frequent changes of Minister of Health. The present Minister of Health could correct me if I am wrong. I think he is number seven.

[Interruption]

Mrs. Jagan: I was never a Minister of the P.N.C. and never will be. I think he is the seventh Minister and really, not being funny, that is too frequent to change. It means that by the time a Minister settles in and understands what the Ministry of Health is all about, he is out. I do not know how long this Minister will be in, but I am sure he has not got into the feel of the whole medical service. It is a very complicated Ministry and it is not

right to have so many changes. I think more attention should be given to stability in the Ministry of Health and the lack of stability may account for the fact that the Ministry of Health is in such a mess.

I would like to look at the last Report of the Director of Audit. I can only quote from the most recent one, which is 1969. I hope you would not criticise me for having a very old Report, but I can do no better as the Audit Department has not submitted any since then. From this we can see that there is need for better administration. The Director of Audit remarked, for example, under the Ministry of Health, paragraph 412 of the 1969 Report, the following:

“Vouchers relating to cash payments made by the Ministry \$120,121.49, Crown Agents \$257,141.63 and sub-Treasuries \$50,121.91 were not produced for audit in support of expenditure totalling \$427,385.08.”

He also said that nine Subheads were overspent, they had no authorisation from the National Assembly, stores accounting was unsatisfactory, no bank reconciliation, etc. The Audit-General said the unsatisfactory state of affairs as recorded in the 1967 and 1968 Report respectively remained the same. As a result, irregularities which occurred in 1967 was not discovered until 1969. Obviously, something must be done.

I turn my attention now to the question of the environment, the socio-economic conditions relating to health. We see that there is an increase now in tuberculosis, malaria, filariasis, and dysentery. Tuberculosis is a notorious disease of poverty, it breeds in poverty and slums, it breeds where there is inadequate nutrition, etc. Why should malaria be going up? Many years ago we instituted the system on the borders of the country, having eliminated malaria throughout the whole coastal lands by a Dr. Giglioli, a very competent exercise. He eliminated malaria under his leadership on the coastlands. They on the border territories of Guyana and Surinam. Brazil and Venezuela introduced a system of medicated salt which was meant to control the entrance of malarias into our boarder areas. This has worked for many years and was quite successful. Now we understand that there is an increase in malaria. I have talked to Amerindians living in the border areas, Rupununi and the North West, and they told me that they are not getting regular supplies of medicated salt. If this is true, then it means that the Government is responsible for the increase in malaria, if it is not keeping up supplies of medicated salt in those areas. I would urge the Minister to look into these things.

Looking at the environmental causes of poor health, we have to look at housing. We have both rural and urban slums; we have very bad slums in the city of Georgetown, in the Greater Georgetown area. We have people living in overcrowded conditions without proper sanitation, without proper toilets, etc. All of these things lead to poor health and lead to disease. We do not have proper pure water supplies. Many Guyanese still have to get

their drinking water by dipping their pots and buckets into rivers and trenches and, of course, the possibilities of contamination are always there. It should be our aim, although we hear all the time that there is pure water everywhere and that Guyana has done so much. But the fact remains that many Guyanese do not have access to a pure water supply and this is an important aspect of good health.

Malnutrition: We have to take into consideration the economic conditions of the people. Malnutrition is growing, we cannot overlook this fact and malnutrition arises generally from poverty. Of course, there are cases of malnutrition arising out of specific diseases. Generally, it is a symbol of poverty. How many of our Members of Parliament have been to the children's wards of the Georgetown Public Hospital? I invite you to go there. I invite the Minister of Health to go there. I advise him if he wants to see the real conditions, not to warn them when he is going. You will experience the sadness one feels when one sees a child that is a skeleton; a child is just barely living; a child that is in a terrible condition because of malnutrition. We have some very bad cases.

Reading from a report given at an international seminar on the status of children in the world today, this point was made:

"In Guyana, the increases of malnutrition are frightening. The Ministry of Health report indicates there is 50 percent malnutrition in the age group of those children under 5 years. Of this, 17 percent under 5 years old suffer from significant malnutrition."

This is serious malnutrition and 16.5 percent which is the third highest in the Caribbean suffer from what is known as Gomez 2 and Gomez 3 which is serious malnutrition. You will see those cases in the children's ward of the Georgetown Hospital. But besides seeing the horror of sad children, you will see the horror of the condition of the children's wards and I wish to emphasize that the Ministry of health must pay for more attention to our children's wards. It is a crying shame and anyone going in there is bound to feel how I feel. I was there yesterday and it was a shocking sight to see the children lying in cots with no linens, not even sheets. Some children were two in a bed. I saw one child who was a little better than the other one who was lying there, stepping over the other child. This is not good enough. There are not enough nurses in the ward.

You tell me how a small child is fed. I do not know. I was there at feeding time. The bigger children were all right, they were sitting at the table and eating. Some of the parents came into the hospital and fed their infants. I don't know how the rest of the infants were fed. It takes about 15 minutes to feed a child and a child has three meals a day. As far as I see, many of the children have to be neglected not because the nurses are callous but because there were not enough hands. Any woman knows that it takes time to feed a child, especially a sick child; you have to encourage

him or her to eat. You have to hold the spoon for some time and you have to talk to the child.

Many of the children were there in a horrible condition in soiled diapers. I saw one child in a sopping wet bed. All these mean you have to have sufficient linen; you have to have larger amounts of linens for a children's ward, just like for old people. Why can't we provide all they need? Why can't we put extra nurses in the ward? Why can't we make the children's wards something we can be proud of? It should be a place where we can take visitors. You cannot take visitors there, they would run out; they would be horrified. I would urge that some attention be given to the children's wards. Next year is going to be International Year of the Child. What are we doing in Guyana for our children to lead healthy lives and to be able to enjoy the benefits of living? Some of them don't even have this opportunity to live as others live. I would urge that this is not being done. Because next year is the International Year of the Child, I think that every effort ought to be made to wipe out malnutrition and to give our children the best of care.

Of course, malnutrition arises out of the problems that face many parents. In this Assembly, many people pass jokes. Sometimes I am dismayed when I hear some of the jokes made about the rising cost of living, it is not funny. It is very serious when the price of rice was doubled a few weeks ago. That is a serious thing and not anything to laugh about. It means life or death to some people. Rice is a staple diet of this country and when the price of a staple diet has gone up almost double, it means that people are going to eat less.

We heard once a slogan about *"sleep less and eat less"*. It is all right for a strong person who lives well to eat less; someone who has got too much weight. That poor man cannot eat less; he cannot pull in his belt. I would like to see who can pull in the belts of their children. Children need rice they need eggs; they need milk. The price of milk has gone up. How on earth are the parents to give them the milk they need, which is a minimum of one pint per day. You tell me how many of our country's poor children get one pint of milk a week or one egg a week. It is all well and good for us to joke but these are realities of life. This is why we have children in the children's wards suffering from malnutrition, because their parents cannot buy milk and eggs and they cannot buy meat to make meat broth for them. These are the problems of life.

We have had some assistance in solving our shortage of doctors, fortunately, with the fraternal help of Cuba. Without the assistance of the Cuban Government, I don't know what would have happened to our medical services. They have fanned out into many of the areas of the county that had no doctors before but still we have many shortages. There is no doctor at Leguan. For example, there is a cottage hospital in Leguan and there has not been a doctor there for over two years. In Bartica, if my information is correct, we have a Cuban dentist but not a doctor. We need a doctor. At

Bartica, there are a lot of accidents. There are sawmills, there are quarries. There are severe accidents that cannot even wait for the patient to be carried to Georgetown, he might need immediate care. Even in our casualty department there are dispensers taking care of patients because we don't have enough doctors. I don't know if the Minister of Health is aware that there is not full-time eye doctor at the Georgetown Hospital. All we have is a part-time Ophthalmologist.

Speaking about the shortage of drugs I wanted to refer to the fact that measles is a disease that has been attacking our Amerindian population. And from my understanding of the situation, we have no drugs for the inoculation against measles.

In the Rupununi and in the North West District, we had quite a number of deaths, mainly of children, from measles and a strong effort should be made to have the immunization drugs available for this. I understand that at the present moment there is a shortage of crystalline, penicillin. Penicillin is one of our basic drugs for use in any number of serious diseases and with another shortage coming up like the one we have last year of insulin, I think it is not a very pleasant situation and I would urge that immediate remedy be made.

Also, I have been informed that some of the wards in our hospitals do not have blood pressure equipment. This is important. The nurses themselves use it as a routine and this is another example of poor administration and of the inability to calculate the needs of the community.

I was talking about malnutrition and the care of children. The care of children is very closely linked with the services that the Government should provide, the Infant and Maternity Clinic are very, very important in the early detection of problems in infants and problems of expectant mothers. I can remember years ago we used to have clinics up and down the rivers all over the interior areas and we established new clinics where they did not exist. Unfortunately, many of these clinics have fizzled out because careful direction is required to keep them going and to see that they are doing what they should do. In those days too, I can remember, we were able to provide certain assistance to expectant mothers and to infants. We provided powdered milk, vitamins, etc. But from what I understand now, nothing much is being provided for those who need these things.

Many of our cottage hospitals and health centres which take care of expectant mothers require them to bring in many of their own things. For instance, at the Cottage Hospital at Leonora, an expectant mother has to bring her own Dettol, toilet paper, etc., into the hospital. The hospital does not provide these things. She is also called upon to make donations to purchase linen and things. Well if we have a free medical service, nothing is wrong with taxing those who have money but the People's Progressive Party very strongly objects to taxing those who cannot afford it, who need help and who should be given the assistance required. They should not be asked to pay or have to spend money to bring in things and these are burdens.

We have a tuberculosis hospital. Have any of the Members of this House visited the T.B. Hospital? Have they ever examined the type of meals provided there? There you have the patients who require body building, tissue building. They have to have the very best of foods so that their bodies can recover from the severe attacks of the tuberculosis bacillus. And what do you find? Sometimes two of the meals a day are merely bread and tea. They are not getting the proteins they need. They are supposed to be given eggs every day but they are not being given the eggs; they are supposed to be given milk but they are not being given the milk. Where is all the milk the Minister of Agriculture was telling us about? Why does he not pass over the umpteen million pints of milk to the institutions?

When the People's Progressive Party was in the Government, we provided milk to the Public Hospital, to the Tuberculosis Hospital, to the Palms, all over so patients were drinking fresh milk which is good for them. Certainly, if we cannot provide milk for the other institutions, at least we should provide for the Tuberculosis Hospital, where I understand there is an increasing number of patients.

I wanted to make reference to the Mental Hospital. Earlier, I made a remark that perhaps the two worst institutions in Guyana are the Palms and the Mental Hospital. I do not know if Members ever visit the Mental Hospital but one or two of them might have to go there for more specific reasons. They would find that conditions there are really bad but the saddest part of our Mental Hospital is that there is not the specialist care there needed for those who have mental disease, and this is sad. I mentioned it last year and everyone laughed but it is not really funny, it is sad to see so many mentally-ill people walking the streets of our country. I understand one was here last night but there are many people who require very specialized treatment and as we know, the treatment of mental diseases takes a very long time, as it is a prolonged treatment requiring very careful attention. Do we have one doctor at the Mental Hospital? We have one? That is all. I think that we have to try very hard.

For the number of years we heard all about the lottery, we heard that we were having a nationwide lottery in order to build a new Georgetown Public Hospital, last year, during this debate, I asked with has happened to the lottery money which was intended for a new Public Hospital in Georgetown. The then Minister of Health did not reply and no one seems to be able to give a proper answer. Maybe the present Minister could tell us what is happening with the lottery funds and is there going to be a new Georgetown Public Hospital built with the funds raised from the lottery? We hope so.

I would like to deal with the question of Amerindian medical care. The Amerindian population of Guyana generally lives in the far-off areas of the country, in the interior and along the river banks. In the Rupununi there is a hospital, a Cuban doctor has been sent there. For a long period there was no doctor but now a Cuban doctor has been sent there. I understand from residents in the area that he is not there on a permanent basis. He is there

intermittently. We should be grateful for his service whenever he performs there but the fact remains that the people of the area are not getting sufficient care they need. For example, there is no vehicle attached to the Lethem Hospital. If I say no vehicle, I mean no vehicle that works. Now people live scattered all over the Rupununi. It had been the practice in the past for the doctor to have a good Land Rover or jeep in which he would move around the Savannahs, visit the various villages, take care of the people,. But now this does not exist. There are cases, where just to get an extraction persons have to travel one hundred miles. One hundred miles in the Rupununi is not like a hundred miles on the Coast. No buses, no aeroplanes. You have to either walk it or perhaps get a horse. There is a shortage of drugs in the area and this I may say is a complaint in practically every interior or riverain area, a shortage of drugs.

It has been sated that the medicated salt to control malaria is not being regularly distributed. Therefore, we will urge the Government to see that the hospital is provided with a proper vehicle so that the doctor, when he is there, will be able to go around and visit.

In the North West District, for instance, at Moruca, I have information that the people built a health centre in 1974 at the Waramuri Mission. Two years later they were told to dismantle it on the grounds that the location was unsuitable. So now, things are still lying on the ground. Patients have to go to the house of the midwife instead of a centre where expectant mothers should go. Obviously, that is not as good as it should be. Formerly, doctors and dispensers were equipped with speedboats in these riverain areas so that they could move around quickly, visit patients etc. But everywhere you go you hear the same tale, the boat is not working; the boat fell apart. In one case, I was told that they finally got the boat going and then they said there was no gasoline. So all of these things are important if we are to provide proper medical services for all the people of Guyana. That was one of the questions I asked.

Are we providing medical services for the whole population? Some Members on the other side of the House said yes. But it is not so. We are not providing adequate medical services for the whole population. If, according to what the Agriculture Minister said, the emphasis is on agriculture, how are we going to keep people in the areas where they are clearing for our cultivation? Obviously, you do not cultivate in an urban area, you cultivate in rural areas. You keep people there by giving them the amenities of life. They are not asking cinemas, they are not asking for all the nice things there are in Georgetown, they are asking for just the minimum. Medical treatment is one of the very important things and you are not providing it. So let us get ahead.

I noticed, for example, areas like Hogg Island, Saxakalli, Trooli Island, if Members know where these places are, Hogg Island is one of your big agricultural producing areas, and not even a dispenser visits the area. There are a lot of people living there, there are children and adults. There are no

medical services at all, not even a dispensary. This is bad. In the Pomeroon River the medical launch is not working. How do you expect the people in the Pomeroon River to produce food and you give them nothing in return? All we do is extract from them. We hear that life is so great for the farmer. Well give them something to make life comfortable. All you do is to take from them and give them nothing. They are taxpayers; they pay as much taxes as everyone else. They are paying all forms of indirect taxation, so give them something instead of just taking. The Pomeroon River boat which used to carry the dispenser who used to visit Amerindian areas is no longer available now the people get no services at all. Children get no dental treatment.

I was reading some of the Mazaruni programmes on the extension of our Health Centre Programme, the training schemes for training paramedics, sick nurses and dispensers. This seems to be the major achievement in health as far as the Government is concerned. No one would quarrel with the Government for training as many paramedical personnel possible. But what is so new about it? Twenty years ago I was the Minister of Health. I did not originate the system and I certainly would not be so silly to stand here and say I introduced the dispensary system. I met a first class system of training of dispensers that existed in Guyana for many, many years. So there is nothing new about the training of sick nurses and dispensers. It is something that has developed over many years and it is a very good system. Many sick nurses and dispensers have been trained in Guyana and are first class. Many of them are so close to being doctors that it is hard to differentiate. They have experience and they get very good training, so I cannot say that it is any great achievement. It is something that has been continuing for many years. I do not think there is anyone in this House who can claim credit for this. But if this is the only health achievement the Government can point out, I can well understand it.

[Interruption]

Mrs. Jagan: In closing, I want to make a few remarks about housing. I am sorry I could not spend more time on housing but I had preferred to devote my attention to the field of health. I want to make reference to the fact that much more has to be done to improve housing conditions in this country. We have dreadful slums existing in this country, slums for which no one can feel proud. I have brought a number of photographs here for Members who might not be aware of the slum conditions in this country, conditions of atrocious housing and atrocious sanitation, both in the urban areas, in Georgetown, in Agricola and in the rural areas, in New Amsterdam, etc. Here we find that many of our people are living under subhuman conditions. It is wrong for people to live under conditions that exist today. It is also wrong to claim the Government has helped the situation. Look at the figures. We were told that for the 1972-1976 Development Plan

65,000 new houses would be built. How many new housing units were finally built? Perhaps 6,000 new houses were built in the five-years. When the Government made its projection, it had broken up its 65,000 into a number of years – five years. In 1972, we were to get 5,000. When we look at the Statistical Bureau figures, which we did not create, we see that 1,791 dwellings were built. In 1973, the projection was 8,000 new housing units but the Statistical Bureau stated that there were 15,075 built. For 1974, the projection was 13,000, yet 12,000 were built. For 1975 the projection was 17,000 and 12,058 were built. We do not have the figures for 1976. Although we were promised 22,000, it is hardly likely that it could have been more than 18,000 or 19,000. Included in the figures given by the Statistical Bureau of the new housing units built in those years are a number of houses for which the Government cannot claim credit. Many people have put up houses without Government assistance.

Our Party said from the beginning that these were unrealistic figures but it was not until 1975 that the former Minister, Cde. Naraine, admitted at an in-service seminar for information personnel that the plan was too ambitious and could not be met. When we look at the allocation for housing, we find that nothing better could be expected. In 1972, it was \$1.7 million, it was \$3 million in 1974, it was \$3.6 million in 1975, it was \$7.5 million in 1976, averaging 1.1 percent of the budget. What are we supposed too? How are they to live?

We say we have a Rent Restriction Ordinance. In fact, the Rent Restriction Ordinance does not protect the majority of poor people. All we have to do is go in the street and see what is happening. I have photographs where people are kicked out of their houses, ejected. What happened? The landlord let his building deteriorate. It goes down to nothing than he appeals for a Closing Order; and then the houses are closed down and the tenants have to get out. Where do they go? They go to their relatives and there is greater overcrowding. Then a new building comes up with a high rental. The law allows a man to put two chairs and a table in an apartment and call it a furnished flat. Some lower income persons are spending as much as 50 percent of their income on rent. In a socialist society, rent should be two or three percent or four percent of the income. And yet we have in some of the schemes put forward by the Housing Ministry, like the Mortgage Finance Bank conditions that the lower-income group cannot meet. What lower-income people can take advantage of that, what lower-income families can pay the interest and the monthly instalments? All these things are out of the reach of the lower-income man.

What is happening to the lower-income families? Families are being neglected and this is why we have a circle – overcrowding, rising prices, eviction from houses, poverty, malnutrition. We are in a vicious circle and we haven't got out of it yet. In our rural and urban areas we have swamps. We have examples where people in the country districts have been forced to squat on lands because they have no place to live. They are fed up living –

[The Speaker: Cde. Jagan you had 55 minutes. You have five minutes more.]

Mrs. Jagan: Housing for the lower-income group in Guyana is a problem and it is a problem closely connected with our health problems. We cannot have a healthy community when we have people living in squalor, living in overcrowded conditions which increase the percentage of disease, which increase the percentage of malnutrition and other problems.

Motion on the Condolence on the Death of Mrs. Elinor DaSilva: 13th March, 1978

[The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House: *“Be it resolved that this National Assembly records its deep regret at the death of Mrs. Elinor DaSilva and pays tribute to the distinguished service which she rendered to Guyana and to its Parliament and directs that an expression of its sympathy be conveyed to her sorrowing widower.”*]

Mrs. Jagan: On behalf of the People’s Progressive Party, I would like to express our deepest sympathy to this House, to the nation... to the family of Elinor DaSilva who passed away just a ... a woman, Elinor DaSilva and I had frequent conversations.

Motion on the Approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for 1980 - In Committee: 17th April, 1980

Head 66 – Ministry of Health:

Mrs. Jagan: I do not know if anyone is going to answer, I do not see anyone in his seat, maybe we have lost a Minister.

[Interruption]

Mrs. Jagan: You are not in your seat.

Item (20), Statistical Establishment:

Mrs. Jagan: I notice that there is a large Statistical Establishment and I would like to enquire from the Minister what is happening with the figures produced by this Establishment. I had figures which I believe were confidential because I have never seen them made public although I referred to them last year during the Budget Debate, showing that the infant mortality rate per 1000 live births had gone up in 1974 to 53.6 from a figure of 38.2 in 1970. However, I note that the World Bank Report of February, 1980, which I referred to in the Budget Debate, has a number of statistics from developed and developing countries in which they cite the infant mortality rate for 1975. I have never seen the most up to date infant mortality rate and I would ask the Minister if he could today tell us what is the latest figure on infant mortality in Guyana? Also, it was revealed in a confidential document that the death rate for children aged one to four years, per 1000 births had gone up in 1974, which was the latest figure I could find, to 12.55 from the figure of 3.8 in 1970.

Now, most of these death rates which I referred to showed a marked increase in the death rate of infants and small children. Whether these statistics were given to the World Bank for their latest report in February 1980, I do not know, but I do know that they are not anywhere revealed in this document. I also noticed that the document carried such important statistics as the percentage of population with access to safe water. Does our Statistical Bureau provide us with such figures? If it does not provide us with such figures I would suggest that it is important for us to have such figures because the lack of pure water supply as well as many other factors contribute to the high incidence of infant and child mortality and therefore I think it would be correct for the Statistical Bureau to be able to give us such figures.

Also, I have heard that the rate of deaths from gastroenteritis is very high and I should like to know if the Minister will today provide us with up-to-date figures from his Statistical Establishment so that we can have an

idea if the health services are functioning in a way that will protect the population. I throw greater emphasis on to the question of infants and children because they are the most vulnerable and they are the ones who need the greatest protection.

Moving on to page 132, item (32), Inspector of Pharmacies - where there are three listed, I should like to repeat a question I made last year, about 12 months ago, and I am still waiting for an answer: has an Inspector of Pharmacies ever inspected the Pharmacy at Jonestown, North West District? We should like an answer to that. We should like to know if at any time there was any control exercised over the quantity and type of drugs used and stored at Jonestown because we do know that excessive and dangerous drugs were on hand and, as we know, it resulted in the murder/suicide of over 900 persons. I hope that this year the Minister will have the information on hand.

At Subhead 9, Pharmacy and Poisons Board – Expenses of, I notice that the amounts requested for 1980 has gone up considerably. Last year we approved an amount of \$5,000 of which only the sum of \$3,044 was spent. Now we are being asked to provide \$8,000. Perhaps the Minister could tell us why?

Subhead 11, Grant to Infant Welfare and Maternity League. We are being asked to approve the sum of \$76,236 which is the amount of the Revised Estimate from 1979 and the actual amount which we approved. But in examining the previous years to which money has been allocated for the Infant Welfare and Maternity League I notice that in 1977 the actual amount spent was considerably more, almost twice as much as we are now being asked to contribute - \$143,750. I am puzzled at the drop from the amount actually spent in 1977 and the reduced amount now being asked for. From what I know of the Infant Welfare and Maternity League it is one of the vital organisations in the maintenance of health, particularly of infants and, of course, expectant mothers and mothers in the postnatal period and in giving advice in relation to infants and small children. I think it is one of the important preventative services offered by the Government and it has a long and rich history. I can remember in the period when I was Minister of Health the Infant Welfare and Maternity League at that time won an international award for the high standard of work which is done mainly by the nurses. I should like to record our respect for and congratulations to that dedicated group of nurses who work so hard to maintain a high standard in the Infant Welfare and Maternity League. Instead of reducing the amount I think a careful examination should be made of their needs.

I can remember some years ago when the People's Progressive Party Government was in office that the Infant Welfare and Maternity League carried the services down all the riverain areas and all the interior areas of Guyana and brought services to women and children who had no other contact with any form of medical services at that time and they were a great help. I found later that many of these services were dropped. Not that the

nurses did not want to go but the arrangements for transportation were not being made and the funds were not being provided. I think every effort should be made in keeping with the point I made during the Budget Debate that if we want to keep people within the interior, rural and riverain areas of Guyana to produce and increase agricultural production we have to give them all the protection and aid and assistance needed and certainly medical health is one of the vital aspects.

Subhead 16, Grant to Guyana Chest Clinic: I note that this grant has been static for a number of years. I understand that the rate of tuberculosis has been going up and down. At some period we believe that we have conquered that dreaded disease and it seems to subside and then again it moves upwards. I should like the Minister to tell us what the present position is as far as the rate of tuberculosis in Guyana is concerned and roughly the number of patients seen monthly at the Guyana Chest Clinic. I should like to enquire if there is a permanent doctor at the Guyana Chest Clinic.

Head 67 – Ministry of Health -Medical:

Mrs. Jagan: Page 133: I had made reference to a number of shortages among specialists listed during the major debate, but I wish to raise them again. We do not have – Subhead 2 – Principal Medical Officer (Preventative). At least, I understand so; perhaps the Minister would require that I give written questions on all those I wish to ask. I could also remind him that we have so many written questions that have not been answered, including those about Jonestown, which were asked about a year and eight months ago, I do not know what is the purpose of this exchange, if the Minister is going to plead ignorance on everything. If the Minister of Health cannot even know about the infant mortality rate, I am sorry for him. How many senior physicians, Item 7, are missing? I notice in 1980 we are supposed to have four. Could he tell us whether we have one, two, three or four?

Medical Superintendent – Mahaica Hospital, Item 12. Do we have a Medical Superintendent? I can remember we had a very good one once but this Party chased the man away. Item 15 Venereal Diseases and Dermatology Officer. Could the Minister say how long we have had that post unfilled? I do not know what happened to the last Officer. But I do know it is very, very necessary to have a specialist in skin diseases. I dread asking Minister questions because I get the same answers but perhaps he could tell us what is the position with venereal diseases? Do we have it totally under control? Is the incidence high? Is the incidence low?

[Interruption]

Mrs. Jagan: I beg your pardon.

[**The Chairman:** Cde. Jagan, you are addressing me, you are not addressing the Minister.]

Mrs. Jagan: I have a feeling though he was making a rude reply because we are discussing venereal diseases. We would like to know how the problems of venereal diseases and dermatology are being solved while we have this vacancy. I am asking him specifically how long has this post been vacant and who is filling in and who is looking after this important social service? The Principal Anaesthetist, Item 22. I understand we do not have an Officer to fill that position. I do not know how the other Members in this House feel, but I do know it is not a very pleasant sensation to go for surgery, especially major surgery, without an expert anaesthetist. This is vital to life and if anyone should know, a lot of people do not necessarily die because of the operation but they die because of the various facilities that are required to keep one alive during surgery, the main one being the Anaesthetist.

I had raised, too, during the Budget Debate Item 26, the provision for two Senior Psychiatrists. The Minister replied to the charge that the mental health of our community is very bad. We do not have the help of any skilled Psychiatrist. He replied with the note that they have built a new unit at the Mental Hospital at Berbice. I think he should know that we could build ten new units but if you do not have a specialist operating them, guiding them, supervising the patients, it is almost a waste of time. I would not say it is a complete waste, but, without a good doctor to administer to the mental health of the people at Fort Canje, it will remain what it is, a snake pit.

Item 31, Senior Dental Surgeon and Item 32, provision for ten Dental Surgeons: How many dental surgeons do we have working in the Ministry of Health? At one time we did have a mobile dental service that moved around the areas, the country areas, not the interior but the coastal areas, looking after the dental welfare of school children. I do not know if we have any mobile units operating at the moment. I would like the Minister to tell us, if we do, how many and roughly, not in detail, I would not expect that, but, roughly, what they are doing and how many patients they are covering? I do not want him to tell me it is part of the Medex Scheme because a Medex can only do so much. A Medex is not a Dentist. A Medex works under a qualified dentist, who must examine all the preparations for fillings, who must supervise extractions and all the various work.

To my general knowledge, and I do not claim I know specifically, I believe that the majority of work being done by the various dental units of the Government is extractive surgery. I should say this is the pattern except for the young lady who was here at the time of the Vincent Teekah shooting, who did very specialized dental work for very specialized people. But, apart from her extra services, I would like to know if the general public is getting the opportunity of receiving preventative dentistry, not extractions, for we know we do not get restorative dentistry. I would not expect the

Government to be able to provide restorative work, but at least the basic work of preventative dentistry – which is mainly doing fillings in the first set of teeth and in the permanent teeth of children. If we can concentrate only on the children, even if we forget about the adults, we will be doing an important service in maintaining the dental health of our child population.

Coming down to Items 33 and 34, I understand the posts of Health Engineer and Assistant Health Engineer are also vacant. Health Engineers are vital, particularly as far as the preventative aspect of health is concerned. Health Engineers are very important in matters of sanitation and I come back to the point I made at the main debate which was that the Guyana Health Service is concentrating too much on the curative and not sufficiently on the preventative aspect and this is where people like Health Engineers and Public Health Nurses come in. Also I would like to know under Item 41 where it is provided that we should have five Nutrition Supervisors. Do we have five Nutrition Supervisors or do we have any at all? Because it is important for us to have persons of experience, qualified and trained in this field of activity.

On page 134, I just want to make one reference to Items 80 and 81, Outboard Motor Operator and Boathand. Are the Outboard Motor Operators and Boathands really functioning? Where are the boats which they operate? It is my information that in the areas where we should have boats to carry our medical personnel, whether it be nurses, dispensers or doctors or dentists into the various areas that we do not really and truly have the means of communication. We have boats but the engines do not work, or we have engines and the boats are leaking or we do not have the fuel or we do not have the personnel, but generally speaking, my colleagues who are well versed in the interior problems will back me up when I say that the boats which are so necessary to carry medical personnel to the people are sadly lacking. The people have to find the medical personnel. That is generally at great cost to themselves and great discomfort. I know the Minister is particularly sensitive to my references to all the various women who have had to be delivered in various odd places. He does not like to hear those comments so I would not burden him with the problem of the common people.

Page 135, item 100, Night Duty Allowance for Medical Officers: This item is going up fairly high. I draw attention to it because I am not protesting the expenditure of the money, I am protesting the expenditure of human lives. Here, we have a shortage of doctors at our hospitals, particularly the Georgetown Public Hospital. We have to have a night-duty service. Obviously, there are so many hundreds of patients there, that there must be an officer on duty. But what happens is, and I think this happens all the time, an Officer who may be on duty during the day is also on duty during the night and then he has to resume duty the next day, so that would give him almost a thirty-six hour period of being on duty. Something like that. And it is impossible! It makes a man or woman a wreck. It also

reduces their ability to perform properly and we have to think of that.

That is one of the sins of having too few doctors, but I do think there must be something done to stop the overexpenditure of the energy and qualities of our medical personnel who are obliged to be on duty for impossible hours. We cannot expect so much from them. Usually it is a syndrome. After a man has worked all day and all night and starts again the next day, he is cross and short with his patients and does not give them the attention they need. Ordinary men and women going for assistance get the back lash from this very poor arrangement.

Subhead 7, Training and In-Service Education for Medical and Para medical Personnel: My information is that although we are spending a lot of money on training and although we want the training of our medical and paramedical personnel, my information is that the quality of training is sadly lacking, that we are not getting the teaching personnel we need to lift the level of our medical personnel to what is desired and, therefore, I think it is not only a question of training, it is a question of having the right people to do the training, those who are capable and qualified to do the training. That is very, very important.

I want to go to Subhead 20, the B.C.G. Programme, which I noticed has been reduced from \$20,000 last year to \$10,000 this year. For some strange reason which the Minister, I hope, can explain, the actual revised estimate for 1979 said that only \$124 was spent. That I find unbelievable. I do not think they could have that much of the vaccine on hand and if they did, it would become quite old. They need to use fresh vaccine, with the B.C.G. particularly, because the B.C.G. programme goes to very, very small children, to infants. In fact, the Minister is a little vague on tuberculosis, saying roughly that it looks like it is going down. I am not sure it is going down and I would say it is important that we keep our B.C.G. programme going in full swing. I was also informed that last year there was a shortage of the vaccine. I do not know if the Minister is aware that there was a shortage last year and that mothers were told to come back and some of them never got the vaccine for their children.

Subhead 21, Environmental Sanitation: This is a very small amount of \$3,000. I do not know exactly what is being done with this money but I do know that environmental sanitation is a basic need in a country like ours. Without environmental sanitation, we are bound to have more diseases. Many diseases arise from poor environmental sanitation, from poor disposal of faeces, poor disposal of garbage, poor water supply and drainage. All of these factors are really important and I do not know if we have a serious environmental sanitation programme.

I know that some years ago we introduced a very good one in which we laid down certain requirements for the building of pit latrines in the rural areas, models that were based on the latest research done in tropical countries. I do not know if we are following up an environmental sanitation programme or if we have a token amount of \$3,000 to just keep the title

there. But a real vital environmental sanitation programme certainly could not be run on \$3,000 and if we are serious about preventative medicine and preventative health we have to take into consideration that these are vital to health. We will continue to have large incidences of gastro-intestinal diseases and other related types of diseases if we do not take care of the environment and make it as clean, sanitary and as healthy as possible.

Head 70 – Ministry of Health: Hospitals and Dispensaries

Mrs. Jagan: Page 138, Item 2, Assistant Hospital Administrator: Is it true that we have neither a Hospital Administrator nor an Assistant Hospital Administrator at the New Amsterdam Hospital, which is a relatively large hospital and that we have someone who is ill-trained for such a responsible post and it is resulting in very poor administration of the New Amsterdam Hospital?

Item 37, Dispensers: We have this year an allocation of 46 Dispensers. I wonder how many Dispensers we actually have. The Dispensary Service has traditionally been one of the finest services for the rural riverain and interior residents, but we find now that areas that have previously been served with Dispensers have no services whatsoever. For example, in the Pomeroun River, we used to have regular visits by the Dispensers and river areas were well served by Dispensers. I can remember when the P.P.P. was in office we also had doctors going into the river district. Now that is very hard on the residents. They have no place to go except, of course, they have to get in a boat and come all the way to the New Amsterdam Hospital and this is not convenient. I would suggest that more attention be paid to our Dispensary Services. I would like to ask too if the Dispenser is going regularly into the two East Coast Rivers – the Mahaica and the Mahaicony.

Subhead 1, Item 46, Dental Mechanic: The Minister accused me of being behind in my information about dentistry. I am not behind and I know that the dentists in the Georgetown hospital are just lying there yanking out teeth. I want to know what we have a dental mechanic for because there is no restorative work that I know of going on, but perhaps the dental mechanic is there to pick up the teeth and dispose of them.

Item 52, Medical Ranger: Under this item, I would like to ask: is it the responsibility of the medical rangers or other officers to see that medicated salt for the control of malaria is distributed in the border areas of the country? It is my information that in some of the border areas there has been no medicated salt for a long period and this is the reason for the increase of malaria which unfortunately our Minister seems to treat in a cavalier fashion and he laughs. But it is not a laughing matter for those people who are contracting malaria because they are not having the substance, medicated salt that was introduced many years ago and has proved a successful method of controlling and preventing the spread of malaria.

I would like to ask the Minister if we have a Respiratory Therapist, Item

72. I see we have a token amount put there so I do not suppose we have. Under item 78 I notice we have provision for 733 staff nurses and midwives. My information is that we do not fulfil the quota needed and I would be pleased if you would give us the figure of how many nurses are actually employed under this Head.

On the next one, Item 79 Nursing Student, I would like again to say that the method of recruiting student nurses and the unnecessary requirement that they do National Service is preventing Guyana from getting the best possible student nurses. If we continue in the direction we are going, the quality of the nursing staff is going to decrease and the dedication and intelligence and emotional commitment to nursing so necessary to have good nurses will move downwards because there are many capable women who want to go into nursing but are not willing to subject themselves to National Service. Again I would like to plead that we leave the National Service out of it and let us train the nurses.

On page 140, under Item 101, Health Centre Attendant, of which we seem to have 43, do we have a Health Centre Attendant for the Kalkuni, Berbice River Health Centre? I would like to know if we do because it is still being used as a school. The old school fell down two years ago and they had to convert the health centre into a school building. I am not saying a school building is not necessary but one would imagine that by this time the Government could have solved the problem so that they could have one health centre and a school building. Having mentioned just a few minutes before, the fact that no Dispenser goes into the Berbice River, and now I bring to your attention the fact that the Kalkuni Health centre is not in operation because it is being used as a school, one can get an even better picture of the problems faced by those hardy residents of the Berbice River, who are getting very little in return for what they do in the way of production etc.

While on the subject may I say that many of the Health Centres are not sufficiently stocked with the drugs and other requirements necessary to have a useful Health Centre. Over and over we hear that there are either no drugs or not enough drugs and we on this side of the House, concerned as we are for the welfare and health of the majority of Guyanese, are insisting that attention be paid to these things instead of the irresponsible manner of allowing the constant shortage of drugs and transportation and personnel that is destroying the health services of Guyana.

This one goes to page 141, Dietary, Subhead 4. I want to make a plea again and again for better food for our hospitals. Those of you if you do go to the public hospital as many of us on this side of the House do, cannot help observing how very unappetizing the food is. I think anyone of us here, although we are a depleted House, would find it most difficult indeed if we had to partake of the meals provided in our public hospital, and we ask that something very serious be done.

I want to raise a question that puzzles me. We know that the cost of

living is going up; we know that the cost of food is going up by leaps and bounds. Hardly a week passes when some price does not go up yet I notice for 1977 the actual amount spent for dietary was \$3,066,883 and now we are being asked to provide the sum of \$3,050,000. There is a difference of three years and we are going to spend this year \$16,883 less than what we spent in 1977. I find that puzzling; I just do not know the mathematics of it unless I am missing some major point but it does seem puzzling that we will spend \$16,000 less this year than we did in 1977, taking into consideration that every single item – I cannot think that there is one single item that is excluded, rice, flour, milk, eggs, greens, provisions – you can think of has gone up I hope it is not that the squeeze is going to be on the diet that our patients have to use.

Page 142, Subhead 14, Drugs and Medical Appliances: I have mentioned this before during the discussion on Health Centres and again I wish to make the point that we on this side of this House have made over and over again, but even if the P.N.C. Ministers think that all we are doing is repeating, I would say that the ball is in their court because we must repeat. They apparently cannot correct these shortcomings, then come back and say that this is an old story. It is not an old story that there are constant shortages of essential drugs. I have friends and colleagues who go to the hospital, who have to go, and they get prescriptions and when they go to the pharmacy for filling them out, they are then told there are no drugs. It happens all the time; you cannot say it does not happen because it happens all the time and many people are not getting the drugs they need. Why do we have to raise here over and over again the question of the shortage of drugs? It means total incompetence, total inability to solve the problems and sheer negligence and a callous attitude. That is my view of the fact that no attention is being paid to two basic things – drugs and the diet in the hospitals.

Subhead 26, Medical Facilities, Orealla: This is the first honest thing I have seen in the Estimates since I have started looking at them - ten dollars for Orealla. I congratulate the regime for being quite honest and admitting that it is spending ten dollars for medical facilities at Orealla. People there are neglected. Ask anyone who has been to Orealla.

Medical Treatment Overseas, Subhead 28 - \$300,000: I do not know who administers it. I do not know who decides who is going abroad but I do know that it is a bone of contention and one of grave dissatisfaction in our community. Many people have medical problems that cannot be solved here and one does not have to expand on why they cannot be solved here because we have already shown how many specialists are absent, whose posts are vacant, the more need there will be to send people abroad for treatment. Yet there are many people who, in the opinion of outside medical officers or doctors, deserve to go abroad for treatment but no one is doing anything about it. Perhaps I am wasting my breath to suggest that more attention be paid to screening these cases and to giving those who really need a chance to save their lives, their limbs or whatever it may be,

by having treatment overseas.

It is a fact – I think I mentioned it last year because I recall the Speaker made certain remarks when I did it – it is a fact that most of the Members of this House when they are suffering from any serious illness do not take their chances here but they go abroad for treatment. We would like the same opportunities to be given to ordinary people, to the small man.

Head 72 – Ministry of Health: Palms

Mrs. Jagan: Page 144, Subhead 4, Dietary, I will be brief again to say that – this is the opinion of my colleagues on this side of the House – the diet provided for our senior citizens at the Palms is inadequate and disgraceful and they deserve more as they spend their last years in this totally miserable institution.

There is an item for the upkeep of the grounds, Subhead 12. I do not know if the term “*grounds*” includes the building but if you drive by the institution you get the first sense of horror by looking at the outside of the building. I would ask the Government to give some consideration to repainting it. It looks like a house of horrors that one sees in these weird and frightful movies and I would urge that we try to make the place look a little better than it is. It is hard enough for the people who have to live in the Palms in a most disgusting, smelly, difficult condition. At least I think some effort should be made and I would suggest that every Member of this House should pay a personal visit to the Palms and then they will know what I am talking about.

Motion on the Increase in Old Age Pension: 5th August, 1980

[The Minister of Health, Housing and Labour:

“Whereas section 8(1) and (2) of the Old Age Pension Act, Chapter 36:03, provides as follows:

8 (1) The amount of pension payable to any person under and in accordance with this Act shall be –

- (a) in the case of a person ordinarily resident in Georgetown, twelve dollars per month;*
- (b) in the case of a person ordinarily resident elsewhere in Guyana than in Georgetown, ten dollars per month.*

(2) The National Assembly may, from time to time, by resolution (which shall be published in the Gazette), vary the amounts and any residential qualification prescribed by subsection (1) with effect from the date of the resolution or such earlier or later date as is specified in that behalf in the resolution;

And Whereas provision was made in the supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the year 1974 for an increase of the amount of pension to fifteen dollars per month payable under section 8 (1) of the Act with effect from 1st September, 1974;

And Whereas provision was made in the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 1976 for an increase of the amount of pension of fifteen dollars per month payable under section 8(1) (b) of the Act with effect from 1st January, 1976;

And Whereas provision was made in the Estimates of Expenditure for 1980 for an increase of the amount of pension to thirty dollars per month payable under paragraphs (a) and (b) of section 8 (1) of the Act with effect from 1st January, 1980:

Be it resolved that this National Assembly in accordance with section 8 (2) of the Act approve that the amounts prescribed in section 8 (1) be varied as follows:-

- (i) from twelve dollars and ten dollars per month as prescribed by paragraphs (a) and (b) respectively of section 8 (1) of the Act to fifteen dollars and thirteen dollars per month respectively with effect from 1st September, 1974;*
- (ii) from thirteen dollars per month payable under section 8(1) (b) of the Act of fifteen dollars per month with effect from 1st January, 1976; and*
- (iii) from fifteen dollars per month payable under paragraphs (a) and (b) of section 8 (1) of the Act to thirty dollars per month, with effect from 1st January, 1980.”]*

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, I would wish to say a few words on this Motion that is before the House. I do not think there is anyone here who can doubt the fact that it is a virtual impossibility for any human being in this country to live on an income of \$30 a month. It is impossible. From this side of the House for many years we have been urging the Government instead of going on its wild-spending sprees to take some care and attention of our old folk. I don't think that the Government has done more than to give our old folk the high-sounding title of "*Senior Citizens*", but I don't think we can call them "*Senior Citizens*" because citizens are supposed to enjoy and there is no right to enjoy if you have to live on \$30 a month. It is meaningless. The closest country in the Caribbean, Trinidad, is paying its old age pensioners a far greater amount.

I want to bring to the attention of this House some of the serious problems encountered by our old folk. One of them is that the old age pension has a restriction going back to the days of colonialism, that is, the means test. The means test is obsolete. It is a restriction that creates a most peculiar circumstance. It is part of the whole system of colonialism, of people being dependent.

Under the existing ceiling figure of the means test, a person seeking old age pension cannot have an income exceeding \$50 a month. So if we take the maximum income an old person can earn of \$50 a month and we add this to \$30 a month, they are now getting, we will get an amount of \$80 a month on which to live. Maybe 15 or 20 years ago a person might have been able to exist on \$80 a month but not today. I remember that in the 40s and 50s a lot of old people used to rent rooms at \$5 or \$6 a month. Those days are gone forever. There is no such thing as a rental room at \$5 or \$6. I would be very surprised to find that any old person could rent a place in which to live for the \$30 a month he is getting. It is just impossible. With the housing situation in Georgetown and the rural areas, it is just impossible. The number of rental premises every single month gets less and less. There are fewer and fewer places to rent and the proportion of low rental is practically removed now. Who can get an apartment for \$30 or \$40 or \$50 a month? They do not exist anymore. The minute it exists the owner will reconstruct or change it around and get a higher rental. So our old people are stuck.

It is also a reflection of the sociological changes that are taking place in our community. With urbanisation – and in the last few years there has been a fantastic flock of people from the rural and interior areas to the city, and as we get greater urbanization we get greater problems for old people because the family system weakens under most urbanization. The family structure in Guyana is weakening and fewer and fewer sons and daughters are willing now to take on the responsibility of caring for their mothers and fathers and grandparents and that is leaving many old people out on a limb all alone. That is why when you walk down the streets of Georgetown you see more and more old people begging.

What is the Government doing? Is it giving charity? We want people to live and to exist, not just to be living from hand to mouth, to be begging, to be constantly moving from one premise to another, which many people do. Many old people are on the move. They stay at this person and then they got fed up with them after a while and they move to someone else. They are not getting proper medical care and so altogether for a great many of our older people life is hell in Guyana and this is one of the reasons why the \$30 a month is meaningless.

Also I want to bring to the attention of this House that even the measly \$30 a month that started this year, is hard to get. In the interior and riverain areas mainly there are some areas where a person has to wait three months to get his monthly pension. This exists because of inefficiency and poor administration. Amerindians in particular are suffering because of the irregularity and the inefficiency of the payments.

Another factor which I wish to bring to the attention of this House is the fact that there are many persons who cannot even get the measly pension that exists. Many people put in applications and many of the applications are not properly processed. There are all sorts of rackets going on for a person to be able to get his pension. Many who deserve old age pensions are not receiving any and so we find that the means test stipulates that a worker, an old man or old woman, cannot earn more than \$50 a month, and, as I said earlier, it is part and parcel of the whole system of colonialism. If a man or woman can earn \$60 or \$70 or even \$100 a month, why should that person be prevented from receiving old age pension?

If we are to maintain this means test, which I think is old hat, I would say put the ceiling at \$300 or \$200. But what is the point of preventing an old person who wants to earn, who might have the ability to earn more? You are preventing him, you are making him dependent, you are making him say: Well, I can't earn more than \$50 so let me sit back and do nothing so I can collect my \$30. That is nonsense; it does not encourage people.

I know of many cases where the investigator went to a person's living quarters, sometimes that person might have a yard, he was growing some bora and pepper and a few things, and the investigator went and ascertained how much income that poor person was getting from the little plants and things he had and once it came to over \$50 month the application was not allowed. That is nonsense and it is not giving persons the initiative to go ahead and earn. If you want to put the ceiling for those who are beyond the necessity of having old age pensions, okay, but have a figure that does not cut into initiative. The main thing comes back to how can old people live on \$15 to \$30 a month, when we find over minimum wage for these unskilled workers in the Public Service and nationalized industries is about \$275 a month. Roughly speaking, that would mean a man and his wife and his two to three children are expected to live on \$275 a month and we know that this is very hard task in view of rising rents, rising cost of living, and the rising cost of our special services.

I may mention in this House that although the Government boasts of its free medical services, the Minister of Health knows as well as I know that there is no free medical service. The fact is that patients in our public institutions have to buy their medicines. Outpatients have to buy their medicines. Most of the doctors have to be propelled into activity, have to be given money. Old people cannot do that, old people get stuck, if anywhere at the Palms, and I think the question of conditions of the Palms has been raised here many times. Many times I have raised it, the poor conditions, the drab living and horrible life for those old people at the Palms. But with all the changes that have been taking place in the twentieth century society, the selfishness arising among many people, and the lack of feeling for old folks and helpless people, attitudes which have developed to some extent in various parts of the world, we find that more attention and more help have to be given to old people. I would suggest that \$30 a month is not enough and that the Government must consider finding resources so that we can have a positive increase in old age pensions. There ought to be a complete analysis and examination of the means test leading to either the removal of the means test or putting the ceiling at the least of \$200 per month.

Motion on the Second Reading of the Local Democratic Organs Bill 1980: 18th August, 1980

Mrs. Jagan: The Attorney General in replying to certain points made by my colleague, Reepu Daman Persaud, used the old technique of the Jesuits in being evasive. I heard my colleagues criticizing the procedures in bringing this Bill to Parliament and making the fundamental point that the State Paper which has been laid in this House was not debated, so instead of answering this question, why the State Paper has not been debated, he answered using the Jesuit technique of speaking about what day the Bill was tabled. That was not the point and my colleague made the point that this Paper should have been debated for many reasons. We on this side of the House have found it to be a pretty good Paper. Is that the reason they do not want it debated? On page 5, it says:

“One of the most serious defects of the system”,

- they are speaking of the present system,

“is that its focus does not include the vast majority of the citizens as active participants in the management of those areas of activities which they perceive to be vital to their welfare, wellbeing and, indeed, their very existence. As a result, most citizens have come to regard local government as something which does not involve them in a direct and personal way.”

That is very true.

“Rather they tend to see it as a fringe institution comprising a few citizens styled ‘Councillors’ who can afford the luxury of spending their time on insubstantial matters not germane to economic existence. The system itself stultified the growth of local democracy and prevented citizens from assuming (or even recognising) their full civic responsibilities. Thus the great reservoir of human resources available for national development remains virtually untapped.”

This expresses the frustrations of the P.N.C. regime over the fact that the local government system has not functioned during its term of office. In this Paper more or less the same tone comes through and there is the need expressed here to change the local government system. That I think there will not be too much disagreement with, but where the P.N.C. regime makes its fundamental error is that there are other reasons why the system did not work and, for the same reason, whatever system you put cannot and will not work because a system cannot work without representative government. It is an impossibility. All the rigging in the world, all the fancy

things, local government will not work unless there are free and fair elections and unless the ballot is used properly. So you can all stand on your hands and/or jump out of the window or do what you want. This Bill has no meaning; it cannot work. All of you know perfectly well that it cannot work. You know that the programme of production and productivity remains the same for the simple reason that the people want representative government and will not have any representative shoved on them.

That is the simple answer to your questions as to why local government has not worked and why there will be no improvement in production and productivity. This is not going to solve a thing. You did not want to discuss the Paper because from the Paper all the essential factors will come out and so instead, what do we have? A stupid Bill here – the Local Democratic Organs Bill. I hereby anoint it S.R.P., Super Rigging Procedure. That will be the name that I will call it because it has no other meaning. This is for super rigging and unfortunately it seems to be what the Members of the P.N.C. want. If they want it they will get it. But they will also get other things that will follow because there is an inevitability in all things on this earth.

[Cde. Hoyte: You are a generalissimo.]

Mrs. Jagan: You are the elitist.

I want to speak about the Elections Commission. This Bill deals to some extent with the Elections Commission in a way that I find perhaps fitting to the role of the Elections Commission. In fact, the clothes fit the body. In this Bill the Elections Commission is going to be allowed to furnish each person who has been elected a Member of the Congress with a certificate. In another section, the Elections Commission shall furnish the councillor who has been elected with a certificate, and again on page 24 the Elections Commission shall furnish each person who has been elected with a certificate.

That is just about the extent of the functions of the Elections Commission, but it was not so intended and, as one of my colleagues said, it is not what is said: it is what is done. I think this is an old copy of the former Constitution but for my purposes I cannot see there is much difference since the words are more or less the same. We do not have a new one on hand but the Elections Commission, as we all know it, has been given the function -

*“(a) of exercising general direction and supervision over the registration of electors and the administrative conduct of elections; and
(b) shall issue such instructions and take such action as appear to it necessary or expedient - “*

and these are the main words –

“to ensure impartiality, fairness and compliance with the provisions of this Constitution”

and this, of course, is what it does not do, as my colleague pointed out. I am reading from the old Constitution, but the new one is identical.

Thirteen years ago when I was on the Commission – I think the gentleman opposite was on the Commission too ...

[Interruption]

Mrs. Jagan: I said I was on the Commission and history has a way of repeating itself. I read from the Minutes of October 25, 1967. I quote what the Chairman said. The Chairman was Sir Donald Jackson. He was drawing the attention of the Commission to the publication of the Bill No. 21 of 1967 and I quote:

“He said that those Members of the Commission who were present at the last time that the Commission had gone to the Ministry of Home Affairs would remember the course that the meeting had taken. He, the Chairman, Sir Donald, had a distinct recollection that it had been stated that if any legislation was involved the Commission would be afforded the opportunity of seeing the draft legislation before it went to Cabinet in order that the Members would be in a position to state any views that they may have. At the interview with the Minister, the Chairman said that his impression was that the Minister substantiated this view but when the Bill was published quite recently the opportunity to discuss it and submit their views was not afforded the Commission. Sir Donald Jackson had learnt from an Information Services Release that the Bill would be before the House on October 26, 1967. He had no idea as to whether the First Reading of the Bill would be moved then or when the debate was going to take place.”

As I said, history has a way of repeating itself because at the last meeting of the Elections Commission which took place on Friday, the Commission had no knowledge whatsoever of this Bill that is before us today and when they met today, they had no knowledge that we were meeting at the same time to deal with it, which means that the Elections Commission is still being treated in the same old way. Legislation that has some relevance to the Commission is not even sent in draft form to the Elections Commission for them to consider it.

This has been the pattern from the very moment the Elections Commission was set up and from the moment that the People’s National Congress regime made it a farce and began their super election rigging procedures. I can remember very well at the very beginning I pointed out to the Commission that it was their job to grapple with the whole machinery of registration and elections or else we would have rigging, and so it is. From the very beginning, the P.N.C. would not go through the Public Service Com-

mission to select the key personnel for registration and later for those conducting the elections. Everyone was hand-picked as they are today. All of the personnel involved in the registration and elections are all hand-picked. Many of the people who manned the polling stations, the day before were on the streets campaigning for the People's National Congress.

This is only one aspect of the rigging. The same electoral list which we had in those days which was rigged and padded and which was not a proper list in any form and in any country and in any language, we are going to have it again today, and we are going to have it tomorrow again. It is going to be a list that has no relevance to reality at all.

I can remember the 1973 Election. I quote from my book *Army Intervention in the 1973 Elections* where I pointed out how in some areas you had padded votes. For instance in Pipiani in the interior, 277 voters were registered but the place was deserted and not one person lived there. In Old World where 383 people were registered as voters, the occupation of 63 was listed as seamstresses. In Yakusari one man runs a mining claim and the highest number of adults and children at that time was 100. Yet the voters list showed 277. What was scandalous about the whole voting procedure in the far off areas was that exceptionally large numbers of voters turned out. For example, in four districts, the average of voting was 95.87 percent, yet in Mazaruni Potaro and the North West District transportation is difficult. Right here in the city the voting average was very low and people had to walk only one or two blocks. We know this because the city was under high surveillance. But in the remote areas where the P.N.C. operators, those who were hand-picked, conducted the elections from beginning to end, you find that they had 95.8 percent in voting, where travelling is almost impossible.

I can remember, too, that we had the incident at New Hope, East Bank Demerara, a small community of some 700 persons and there were 100 persons whose names were on the registered list of voters but no one could find them. Persons living in the village for 20 and more years could not recollect ever hearing the names of those persons. Occasionally, in any community, there will be one or two people no one knows but not 100, and when the period for objections and claims to the voters list was announced and my party challenged those 100 names, we had to pay a deposit of \$5.00 each. The Returning Officer for the district discounted 7 applications as being incorrectly prepared but he sent out notices by registered post for the 93 remaining names to attend the hearing and in the presence of the legal representative of the P.P.P. the Returning Officer produced the 93 letters which were returned to him undelivered. They were stamped by the postman: "*Could not be found. Removed from the district.*" The Returning Officer refused the lawyer's request to invite the postman to the hearing to question him as to how he came to the conclusion that they had removed from the district, and the 93 objections were overruled and the names remained on the list despite declarations of witnesses from the area at the hearing

that the persons never lived there. And so on and on and on the tale can go of padding of lists and all the forms of corruption.

I can remember on voting day 1973 we were inundated with hundreds of people who came to say they went to the polls to vote but they found out that they had already voted; someone had said that they had signed their names on the postal ballot but they had never signed their names on anything. So the wholesale rigging, I don't have to name every form of rigging, but this is what we are going to have again under the Local Government Bill and I come back to the main point, what do you achieve except holding on to these tainted seats in this House that has no meaning? There will be no changes in local government administration or the reactions and response of the people until we have free and fair elections, until we have representative government.

I spoke of the lack of consultation with the Elections Commission which is a crying shame, but the impotent Elections Commission seems prepared not to bother about it. Money, they say, is the root of all evil. You will know what I mean, money and you. At any rate, we made the point that there was no consultation with the Elections Commission; there was no consultation with anyone. The people of Guyana were not consulted; the people in all the districts of Guyana were not consulted. Why the indecent haste to bring this all of a sudden? For 37 months the P.N.C. has been dragging its feet, trying to make up its mind if it wants election or not. I suppose, who knows? The Members of the P.N.C. are the only ones who know if we are going to have it or not. No one knows, but anyhow, now the pace gets hotter and someone says rush it through, they rush it through. But why there was no consultation with the people? There has been no consultation at any level and this is a crying shame.

I would not have more to say on this Bill because there is not much else you can say except that it is part of the whole rigging process. It's an abomination! I would close with these words, that even the longest rope has an ending, and there is a pattern of living and there is a pattern of life and all things are connected. There is a beginning but, my friends, there is always an end.

[Applause]

Motion on the Second Reading of the Household Service Workers (Hours of Work) Bill 1980: 24th October, 1980

Mrs. Jagan: Cde. Speaker, this legislation which is before the House deals only with the questions of maximum hours of work and sets out a 48-hour week with a full day off each week. This legislation, as the Minister himself confessed in his most defensive and apologetic address to this House has a history. The history to my recollection begins with the 1964 elections when his Party made a promise that it would rectify the position for domestic workers. Grand promises were made of what help would be given so that domestic workers would not have to continue to be punished. The outcome of that promise was the setting up of the Campbell Committee which, as he said, was appointed in November 1965 and there ended the P.N.C. promises because that Report was submitted 14 years ago in August 1966. It took them a few months to lay it before this Parliament and from the time these two occurrences took place – the completion of the Report and the handing over and the presentation to this House, nothing has been done until the publication of this Bill on October 11, 1980. What a shame! It has been pigeonholed. It has been literally put in the deep freeze and let me say to this House that it is not for want of reminding. The Members of the P.N.C. have been reminded over and over again that this Report exists and they must act on it. They cannot give an excuse that they forgot about it because they were reminded. I personally have raised this matter – I cannot say how many times. I never had a positive reply because they were dodging the issue and we know why they were dodging the issue. Not for the excuses given here but for the fact that many of their own supporters are the employers of domestics and they would have to dig deeper into their pockets to hand over some nor a money to these exploited employees.

On March 2nd, 1978, one of my colleagues, Cyril Belgrave, asked the question in this House about a minimum pay for domestic workers. That is approximately two and a half years ago and that question has not been answered because they cannot answer it and so the question is, as the last speaker said, how effective can maximum hours be without a minimum rate of pay?

We have heard the excuse that perhaps they can be criticized for not having put in a minimum wage but they claim they have these peculiar circumstances and it will continue to engage their attention. How many times have we heard those words? Yet this group over here, the P.N.C., belabour us with their ideology of cooperative socialism, their adherence to all the tenets of Marxism and Leninism. But let us look at little Trinidad and Tobago. Dr. Williams makes no claims to be a Marxist-Leninist. Dr. Williams does not tell anyone that he is building a socialist society. No. He states what he is, whatever that may be, but Dr. Williams and his Govern-

ment in a non-socialist atmosphere on November 28, 1979, passed effective legislation of which I have a copy here, and ordered for minimum wages and terms and conditions of service for household assistants made by the Assistant Minister of Labour. They have set out the wages and they have done it like this: Full time household assistants for the year 1980 will be paid a weekly wage of \$55 and in 1981 in Trinidad a household worker will be paid \$70 a week. Then they have done it in a different way. They have categorized part-time household assistants and they have set out hourly rates – 1980, \$1.42 an hour; 1981, \$1.70 an hour.

They also state in the Bill – just one page, a very simple piece of legislation much simpler than ours. It states – Hours of work: a 44 hour week, even better than this 48 hour week in this so-called “*Socialist Republic of Guyana*”. A 44 hour week spread over six days. It is very clear. A person without too much knowledge of legal matters, I am sure, could draft this. There is provision for vacation leave – 14 days a year. Everything on one page. Another one: sick leave – 14 days sick leave per annum. It says “*Other Matters*” - that the duties of household assistants should be clearly set out in writing. You have the basic things set out here in the most simple language that any worker can read. You don’t have to be a lawyer: minimum wages for this year, for next year, minimum wages per week, hourly wages for part-time workers. It also sets out the overtime hourly rate. Everything is set out here: overtime hourly rate; the 44 hour week, a six day week, holidays with pay and sick leave. So it can be done. We can see it is not impossible to do, but instead we have this gimmick, the gimmick at the zero hour. Why did it take 14 years to toss up this sheet of paper? Why did it take 14 years and they could not produce what Trinidad produced a few months ago? It is amazing.

So the fact remains that the Guyana domestic workers are not being given a square deal. Attention is not being paid to their needs. The Campbell Committee sat down and belaboured and presented what at that time was a pretty good Report. I cannot really recall all the details of the Report but I do recall that at that period – things have changed now – it was all right, and if it had not been stuck in a pigeonhole or put in the deep freeze perhaps decent legislation could have come out of the Report and we would not have to sit and listen to all the puerile excuses that have been presented with this Bill.

One would imagine that in 14 years we could have something better. There is a radio programme “*From Word to Word.*” We are now “*From Election to Election*”. From the 1964 Election right up to the coming one, it has taken them all this time not even to fulfil a promise but to partially fulfil a promise that will probably not work at all because the maximum hours of work cannot stand alone unless they have the foundation of a minimum wage.

Motion on the Approval of Government's Policy in President's Address: 13th February, 1981

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, as one of my colleagues said when he addressed this Chamber yesterday, the most notable feature of Mr. Burnham's speech is not what he said but what he did not say. I want to carry that opinion a little further. Nowhere in this document in our hands do we find mention of one of the overwhelming problems that exist in this country. I speak of unemployment. It is certainly a problem that bears the closest and deepest attention because it is like a dangerous disease. It destroys people; it is worse than a cancer because ultimately it causes, one might say, some of the same symptoms.

Unemployment is exceptionally high in Guyana. The Government will not provide us with statistics. We can only guess and the guess by non-governmental analysis is that it is somewhere in the vicinity of 25 – 30 per cent. Whatever may be the exact figure, there is not one single person in this Assembly who would dispute my claim that it is one of the most serious problems. Is there any light at the end of the tunnel? At one time – not so long ago – the then Prime Minister said that there was light at the end of the tunnel, but unfortunately no one has ever seen that light.

Why is there no perspective in this document? Why is there no projection on how the regime intends to solve the problem of unemployment? Does the Peoples' National Congress take into consideration what unemployment does to human being? The Government provides not one cent in unemployment relief. What does that mean? It means that the thousands and thousands of unemployed and their families have no means of livelihood. Then you will ask: how do they survive? We know how they survive. They survive on their families. Their families keep the unemployed and their wives and their children alive and that, as you know and as we all know, creates an additional burden on the working families, the working-class families, the small farmers' families who have the impossible problem of making two ends meet in a situation where the income is low and where the cost of living is high.

These are serious problems and the Government is turning its head away from this basic problem. One would imagine that the minimum that could come forth would be for some form of relief. The last speaker made some reference to the various countries and continents from which the people of Guyana came. He spoke of the past. I speak of the present. Where are they going? They are going to North America; they are going to England and they are going to Surinam in search of work.

One of the chief reasons why people depart from Guyana, leave their homeland which they love and which they do not want to leave, is that they have to live and to live one needs an income and the exodus rate is going

up. Again, what are the real figures? I don't know. Certainly the list of overseas voters is not gauged. The number of Guyanese living overseas is a scandal and we all know it and I predict in this Assembly that this year will be perhaps the year of the highest retrenchment by the Government of Guyana. In other words, I believe – I hope I am wrong and I would be only too happy if you prove me wrong – that this year unemployment will go up. I fear it will. If you gentlemen and ladies can prevent it, all good for you. You speak over and over, *ad nauseam*, of the right to work. It is nonsense to talk about the right to work. Guyanese are willing to work but give them jobs. That is what you cannot do. Do not talk of the right to work being written in the Constitution. It does not have any meaning to anyone. No one cares what is written. Everyone cares what is done; that is what counts and in the past Constitution and in the present Constitution we will see that what is done, how the Constitution is dealt with, is what counts, not what is written there. So let us get away from that.

I heard the speaker before the last saying that the emphasis is on people. Well, if the emphasis was on people certainly we would say the first emphasis on people is to have them to live and they cannot live without employment and the Government has no solution because it is bankrupt of ideas. I hear all the talk about people, people must be involved, why is it that this document does not deal with the problems that people are concerned with? What about the cost of living? What is said here about the cost of living affecting every single person in Guyana? I would agree that it affects those with the highest income and the least and it affects those with the lowest income or no income the most. So I hear someone murmuring about the Americans? If so, let me remind you that I am a Guyanese citizen. I have given up what not one single person here would give up but practically everyone here would desire to go there.

I notice that with barely a pause after the election campaigning, the cost of living started to mount and mount at an astronomical level. The basic things that every Guyanese uses - rice and milk - have already gone up. Has anyone here an apology for it? There is no apology for raising the price of rice and raising the price of milk. Already our women in the lowest income group cannot buy the milk that they need for their children. Expectant mothers do not have the funds or income sufficient to buy the milk they need and yet the price is going up. Why is not milk subsidized? Why hasn't the Government put forward even a minimum poverty programme, as small programme? Let us subsidise milk to expectant mothers; let us subsidise milk to infants and children. Let the Minister consider such a programme because it is necessary; it is needed, unless the Government can do as they do in some socialist countries – provide free milk to all children. Milk has gone up 27 percent and that is no joke for a poor man. Everything has gone up.

My colleague spoke of the melting of the rent freeze. Rents are going up. Small householders have to pay more for water rates and taxes. Elec-

tricity went up 100 percent last year and now 55 percent. Water rates and transportation have gone up. It is only the tip of the iceberg we are seeing with the rise in the prices of milk and rice. I again predict to this Assembly – if I am wrong I would be glad – that prices are going up more and more during 1981. You cannot stop it. Clothing has gone up, children's clothing and spare parts.

We heard a long dissertation about the transition to socialism. I wonder if the gentleman who spoke about the transition to socialism knows that in the socialist countries children's clothing is heavily subsidized. In those countries children's clothing is horrible expensive. Have any one of you examined the price of children's clothing? A pair of socks for a small child can range from \$5 to \$7. Ask yourself how much for a pair of shoes, household goods, pots and pans, and glasses and dishes. What happens when a young man and young woman get married? How can they buy the pots and pans? Go to the Government-owned stores and see what they charge for pots and pans. The inflation rate in 1980 was 100 percent and yet we have had a wage freeze.

Cde. Speaker, in 1977, the T.U.C. and the Government worked out an agreement whereby the minimum wage for State employees would go up each year. But the Government has not honoured its agreement. Why can't we have indexation? As the cost of living goes up the wages must automatically go up. Many countries are doing that. How can people survive on a wage of \$11 a day when every single thing is creeping up day after day? It is going up at a very fast rate, not creeping.

Under the I.M.F. pressures they are going up more and more, and under I.M.F. pressures there is more retrenchment. When is this wage freeze going to be called off? Maybe I am wrong in assuming, but one of the first documents put here in this Assembly yesterday, to my knowledge, unless I am incorrect, it was the first real business session – and Mr. Chandisingh says that we are a people in a hurry – was in order to increase the salaries and allowances of the four Vice-Presidents and yourself. I hope I do not embarrass you. I think I would agree with the speaker who said "*we in the P.N.C. are a people in a hurry*". Yes, you are a people in a hurry to increase the salaries of certain people. But why can't you be in the same hurry to pay the \$14 minimum? Why can't you be in the same hurry to prevent electricity charges going up 55 percent? Perhaps this is an indication that the wage freeze is now melted. Can I assume that this first important document, if my calculation is correct, means that the Speaker would be getting an increase in this salary of 153.3 percent and the salary and the duty allowance and entertainment allowance have gone up considerably from \$18,000 a year to \$38,400 a year, or from \$1,500 a month for the salary and allowances to \$3,200 a month?

I notice that from this document the four Vice-Presidents will also be receiving increases that would carry them from their salary, their duty allowance and entertainment allowance to the same \$3,200 a month and, of

course, with the extra benefits of house allowance, car allowance, travel allowance and chauffeur allowance. So let us hope that this is a breakthrough for the working class. I am waiting for the Prime Minister to tell me that this is the breakthrough, this is a new policy, that the wage freeze is broken and now the minimum wage is automatically going up. I would be the first to cheer and shake your hand, Mr. Prime Minister, if you do that.

This document does not mention something else that the man in the street is increased in. There is not mention of tax relief. Will it be more taxes or do we have to wait until the Budget to know if it is less taxation or more taxation? Shall we judge for ourselves from years of experience that it will probably be more taxation? Perhaps the taxation will be of the hidden variety. I would like the Prime Minister to tell us a little more, I keep getting whispers and little references, inside and outside documents about a sales tax. Is there a sales tax? The I.M.F. referred to a sales tax that will have to be introduced. Perhaps I read in some official document a reference to a sales tax. Let us hear all of the taxes and if they are going up or down.

This document makes no mention of another problem that concerns all Guyanese and even the Members of this House. I am speaking of crime. The crime rate is going up. We have more delinquents, we have more murders, we have more corruption. There is a new immorality that is cutting into the national fabric. What has the Government to say about crime? Go in the street. You talk about people, involving the people. Go and walk on any street, go in any shop and you will find that the high incidence and growing areas of crime is a problem that concerns all people and all of us right here in this Assembly too. I heard one of the speakers refer to Abraham Lincoln and his concept of democracy: government of the people, by the people, for the people. What a distortion to relate those high sounding words to the sort of "democracy" that we have here. It is a shame, a disgrace. Lincoln's concept was a noble concept. I do not believe in the old adage about someone turning in their grave. But perhaps the bones would turn when they hear the concept of government of the people, by the people and for the people as being exemplified by this National Assembly and the recent elections. That is going a little too far.

I listen to one of the speakers tell us about the transition in which the P.N.C. is leading the country, the transition to socialism. I want to ask if the lifting of the rent freeze is part of the transition to socialism? I want to ask if the denationalisation of the bauxite and sugar companies is part of the transition to socialism? I want to ask if the New Investment Code is part of the transition to socialism? I want to ask if the removal of controls and subsidies is part of the transition to socialism? These are questions that bear examination.

I wanted to refer to this other problem because many of the things I have raised come basically to the question of financing, financing projects that will be benefit to the people. There is a song that was sung after the last war; it's a song that some of us know. "*Where have all the flowers gone?*" I

want to turn the word “flowers” into “money”. Where has all the money gone? There has it gone? Where has all the money that this country had gone? It’s gone away.

In 1979 the Government collected \$396 million. Where has it gone? Does the Minister of Health see it there in the hospital, in the dispensary, in the miserable beds and hopeless linen and the fact that women are sleeping two in a bed? Has anything gone to the hospital? I don’t think so.

We know that 57 percent went towards debts and compensation payments. Every loan this Government raises and squanders we pay back in all forms and we the people are taxed. I know too, that \$8 million goes blindly to the Ministry of National Development every year. Form 1970, when we spent only \$15 million on the Army and Police to last year when we spend over \$100 million. That’s where the money has gone and that is why today you have to remove the subsidies on most of the important foods. That is why the electricity rates are going up and the food prices are going up and the transportation and all the things have gone up. That is why today, Guyana is in shambles.

I look at this booklet “... *in our hands lies the destiny of the Cooperative Republic. Let these be safe hands.*”

[Government Applause]

Mrs. Jagan: Our Republic, I say without any reservation, is not in safe hands.

[Opposition Applause]

Approval of Estimates of Expenditure 1981 Budget Speech: 2nd March, 1981

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from the Budget Statement given by the Minister.

[**The Speaker:** Cde. Jagan, the Vice President. He is no longer a Minister he is a Vice-President.]

Mrs. Jagan: The Vice-President said “...*the end of one era and the beginning of a new.*” Then he said:

“...we are at an epochal stage of our history that is at once the culmination of long years of tenacious struggle and the starting point for new and more strenuous endeavours.”

I am sorry he is not here but in my opinion and in the opinion of our Party he is talking through his hat. There is no relation to the reality of the situation here. The reality is that the people of Guyana will not accept the P.N.C. regime and will not accept his posturing. There is no relief in it. The results are there for all of us to see as he had to admit in his own Budget Address. The Constitution and the recent elections will not give the people “*the opportunity to manage and control their own affairs*”. If they did, things might be different: we might be on the road to prosperity instead of all the loud noise about what we are going to do and what we ought to do. The fact is that unless you “*have democracy*” not “*talk democracy*” as the last speaker was doing, unless you have real democracy, the people are not going to put their backs into it and they are not going to push forward, which is what all of you are talking about. You will not have it.

Mr. Hoyte claims that the Constitution gives a sense of direction. What direction? We are heading towards fascism, which is repressive of the opposition, and the State creating its own elite, as has happened in other countries. We are seeing it here. Look out of the window and you will see a car as big as a boat, part of the elite. The elite is getting better and better.

[**The Speaker:** Cde. Jagan, that car was bought from the Russian Ambassador.]

Mrs. Jagan: He is an Ambassador representing one of the most powerful States on earth. You are an individual, Sir, if I may say so, and you are in the process – you will interrupt me – of acquiring massive wealth. You are part of the new elite that I am talking about. I am talking about socialist democracy and trade and an egalitarian society. You are an example of

what the P.N.C. calls an egalitarian society and you can have a car as big as a boat and then you can get 153 percent increase in your salary. That is what I am talking about.

[**The Speaker:** My increase in salary shows that I am working here, but you are leading a minority which is dwindling every day.]

[**Laughter.**]

[**The Speaker:** Let us come back to the debate, please.]

Mrs. Jagan: I will get on with the debate if you stop interrupting me, Sir. There are people in this Assembly getting ten and twenty times the income of the small man and yet I have to sit here and listen to someone talking about the small man being a real man. The small man cannot be a real man in this society where there are people getting ten and twenty times what the small man is getting. In fact, the theoreticians will tell you that the essence of socialism is shortening the gap between the lowest paid and the highest paid, but this Government is lengthening the gap. Don't fool us with talk about the Constitution focusing attention on "*the real, substantive human rights*". What human rights?

The right to work when unemployment is going up; the right to decent housing - when we have some of the most abominable slums in the Caribbean - medical care, leisure. Let me quote the Vice-President - he is talking about employment: decent housing, education, medical care and leisure. I don't know where everyone is but I say: take a walk down Albouystown where the working class has its leisure. Children have to play cricket in the streets and have to dodge as vehicles go by. They have no place for leisure. Only the elite, only the upper crust in our society has leisure. They talk about building a resort for Anna Regina. We heard the same thing last year. The poor children of Guyana have no place for leisure, they have got to run and play on the streets; they have got to mix with the pimps and the prostitutes; they have to grow up under the worst conditions.

You tell us about unemployment. The Vice-President in his speech quotes the unemployment figure in the UK; in the USA. Why didn't he tell us what the unemployment figure is right here in Guyana? Because he dared not. Let him say what the true unemployment figure is. Why doesn't he tell us what are the unemployment figures in the Soviet Union, in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, in Hungary? Let him tell us how inflation is on the rampage in these socialist countries. He says on page 11:

"We in Guyana cannot postpone or defer the provision and upgrading of social services and amenities ..."

What about health? I am interested in health. I looked through the

Budget. There are four references to this social amenity. I will tell you what the references are. On page one he spoke about medical care and leisure. Then he spoke about completion of a hospital at Aishalton. The exact words used in the 1980 Budget. We are still waiting to see the completion of the Aishalton hospital. He spoke about health care delivery project which was going to be completed. The exact words are in the 1980 Budget. So two of his references to health are repeats of what they promised us in the 1980 Budget and what they are now promising again in the 1981 budget.

On page 16, the fourth reference talks about N.I.S; about Medicare benefits. What does that mean? Does that mean that the injured or sick person will get coverage when he or she goes to a private hospital? Because we have a free medical service. Why do you need Medicare? You need Medicare because most of the people who get sick want better treatment. They have to go to private hospital if they want decent treatment. That is what Medicare is all about. What has happened to all the promises? In the 1978 Budget we were promised a new Outpatient Clinic; we were promised a 400-bed hospital in New Amsterdam. Let me read a G.I.S. handout dated December 17, 1976. This is March 2, 1981:

"A new hospital would be constructed in New Amsterdam in 1977."

Mr. Minister of Information, I am reading – of course you weren't there then. I am reading from your exact statement as handed out. In 1977 we were going to get a new hospital in New Amsterdam. Where is it? We all know where it is.

What about staffing? Has the Vice-President or anyone really talked about how you are going to give us the medical services that are needed? 75 percent of the doctors servicing Guyana are foreigners. You can't even hold the local doctors. Ask yourselves why. A doctor when he comes here as an intern is given \$675 a month.

[The Speaker: Comrades, please don't interrupt.]

Mrs. Jagan: It is \$675 per month and you know that the Guyana Government treats its young doctors so badly that they have to wait several months to get their pay. I hope you know that; I hope you have corrected it because it is a fact. When they finish their internship they get \$850. Why can't we pay them more? If we have a shortage of doctors, let's pay them more.

Let me tell you that the cost of the whole operation of the Mass Games up to this stage, from the end of the year until now, is \$686,700. I figure I'm not a good mathematician but if the computer is correct, 67 doctors could be employed for one year out of what this Government spends for Mass Games.

The regime pays Ministers of the Government, Speakers, Parliamentary Secretaries and the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Regional bodies

more than it pays the doctors. This is one of the problems. They get paid higher. The recent Order – and this is the second Order raising salaries – giving Regional Chairmen, with their salaries and tax-free allowances, \$1,900 a month and yet you pay your doctors \$850. No wonder they are going away. We cannot hold them because we are not paying them what they need. That is why we have a shortage of doctors. Perhaps the Minister will tell us how many doctors we need.

And nurses are underpaid. There must be the money if you've got so much money to throw all over the place and pay Vice-Chairmen of Regional Councils \$1500 a month of which a great portion is tax free. We must be able to pay the people who have something very positive to give this society. We must give them a salary with which they can be happy and they can live decently. We must be able to provide them in the hospitals and clinics where they work with an environment that will enthuse them, which will encourage them to work. But what do they have now? You do not even have an E.C.G. at the Public Hospital that works. Go, check them. You do not even have containers and reagents to carry out the blood and urine tests that have to be taken. You do not have the basic things that doctors and nurses need in order to feel the dignity of their professions so that he can carry forth what they have been taught for themselves to their own satisfaction, and the satisfaction of their patients.

Let us look at the cost of living. Last year we were promised that it would come down. Let me read to you from the Budget Statement last year, page 51 where the Minister said:

“At the same time there will be an upward adjustment of consumption taxes on import. The overall effect of adjusting consumption taxes and revising mark-ups downward will be, as already explained, to remove extraordinary fluctuations in these prices and ensure that any movements in those prices are related to movements in cost and are justifiable.”

Where did they stabilise the prices? The cost of living has gone up and continues to go up. I may mention that the cost of living in Guyana goes up before and after each Budget. Never in the Budget. This is a before and after Budget. You do not put the squeeze and wring the consumer's neck at Budget time. You do it before and you do it after.

In this 1981 Budget Statement the Vice-President said:

“Price policy will continue to aim at defending the wages of the workers by ensuring that the mark-up on essential commodities bears a reasonable relationship to acquisition and selling costs.”

What is going up? Before he came here with this Budget, rice and milk went up, and electricity, which is basic to our living, and water rates and taxes, so that one thing is said in these Budgets and something else is done.

The P.N.C. regime boasts that it has raised the old age pension from \$30 a month to \$45 a month. According to last year's estimates we paid out old age pensions to approximately 16,000 persons - this year approximately 18,000. According to what we have in the Estimates it should be an increase of approximately 1,667 more persons in the number of persons who will get old age pensions. I would like at the appropriate time for the appropriate Minister to tell us how many people are entitled to old age pension. In my view 16,000 or 18,000 is far below what a population such as ours should have in people 65 years and above. I believe one of the reasons for this is that in the processing of old age applications there is great negligence, there is grave delay. My information is that the process or applications sometimes takes even more than a year, that there is a lot of patronage involved and lack generally of fairness and I would ask that we attempt to have a fair process of granting old age pensions. I would say that \$45 -

[Interruption]

Mrs. Jagan: I do not think that I have to talk very much to convince this Assembly. You will think it is a big joke but I would like to see one of you live on \$45 a month, or one of your mothers or fathers live on \$45 a month. No one can live on \$45 in this country. We should be paying old people enough for them to survive and live decently. They have given; they have contributed. How can they live on \$45 a month, especially with the removal of the recent freeze it is going to be worse because the rents are already going up? All the high-sounding words that the other Vice-President, Mr. Green, was uttering - women's rights and all the great things the Government is going to do for women. Do you know what it sounded like to me? It sounded like the old colonists. He was paternalistic in the way he spoke. He was not speaking as a man who really believes in the equality of women. I stand here and I have no hesitation in saying that in my view he is a male chauvinist. He is not a man who really believes in equality of women. All the high-sounding phrases -

[Interruption]

[The Speaker: Comrades, please let us have some order.]

Mrs. Jagan: With all the high-sounding phrases he has not got down to the nitty-gritty yet to know what women's rights are all about. I will tell you what women's rights are about. Women's rights are about full employment; they are about a decent wage; they are about having proper pre-and postnatal care. Women's rights are about not having two pregnant women in one bed in hospital. That still exists and if the Minister tells me that it does not, I would tell him that it still exists. Women's rights mean that women do not have to carry buckets of water; and they must not spend

hours queuing up for the most essential things like salt and flour and margarine and soap. Women's rights, Mr. Vice-President, mean that you must give a minimum wage to domestic workers and not talk about maximum hours. Give domestic workers a minimum wage -

[Interruption]

Mrs. Jagan: I do not have a domestic. I do my own work. Under this Government I have to fetch buckets of water. That is what I am talking about. Yesterday I carried five buckets of water. In my house there is no water. I have become an expert on buckets and candles in this country. No electricity, no water.

Where are our women employed, I ask you? Where? In the worst work. The women are domestics, they are waitresses, they are field labourers, they are shop clerks and they are cleaners in your Ministries. You do not have one woman on your Front Bench, not one woman. After 16 years you cannot have one woman sitting on your Front Bench? I am the only woman in this Chamber on the Front Bench. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

[Interruption]

[The Speaker: Comrades, let us have some order, please.]

Mrs. Jagan: Our women need technical training so that they can have good jobs. Some of them have technical training. I know women are trained as plumbers, as masons. They cannot get work. Are we providing the climate where women can get technical jobs? Where they can get decent jobs? Only a small percentage of our women have been able to get jobs in professions – economists, doctors, a few others in administration, but the majority of women – and the women here know it even though we are in different Parties; they know as well as I do that women are not treated as equal and that makes chauvinism predominate in this country. I for one, as a woman, did not like the paternalism expressed by the Minister.

I heard the last speaker talking about socialist democracy; talking about the small man becoming a real man; talking about free elections. He should be ashamed of himself when he talks about free elections. We do not have free elections. The last elections were no indication -

[The Speaker: Five minutes more.]

Mrs. Jagan: - of how the people of Guyana feel. He enjoys calling us the Minority Party but I am afraid that in reality we are the Majority Party and this group over there is the Minority Party. If you do not believe it, have free and fair elections. Allow an Elections Commission which is not tampered with, not controlled, and does not have poodles, allow a real Elec-

tions Commission as they do in other countries of the Third World. For example, in India, the Elections Commission is totally independent and it runs the elections without interference by any part of the State apparatus. If we had elections such as in India, you would see who would be in office.

In the last few minutes I have I would like to take this opportunity of saying a few words from the statement of my colleague Narbada Persaud who was not permitted to say all he had to say. He referred –

[The Speaker: Cde. Jagan, I take exception to that. He was permitted to say what he had to say within the time allotted. If this Assembly did not give him an extension of time, it is no one's fault.]

Mrs. Jagan: Thank you for the information. The President in his address said that a well-housed citizen is likely to be more productive than an ill-housed one. Surely this is so. But what about a healthy and well-fed citizen? Knowledge, skills and attitude are not the only aspect of human resources that affect economic performance. A healthy and well-fed labour force is more physically and mentally energetic than one that is sick and hungry and therefore gets more work done and is more motivated.

Our average income of \$1,488 per capita in 1979 was among the lowest in the Western Hemisphere. Today, it is far less. And he speaks of unemployment. I will not go into this. He spoke of the income tax allowances. When the adjustments were announced for allowances to personal income tax last year, the regime envisaged that revenue on this Head would have decreased by \$14.15 million but because the benefits to the workers were so negligible there has been no decrease in revenue collected as has been expected. Instead it increased by \$3 million in the same way as the widening of the tax bands announced in the 1981 Budget Speech will hardly increase the workers take-home pay pocket and will hardly affect the revenue from this Head-

Toward this objective Narbada Persaud made some objective points. He said that we should establish majority popular rule in place of minority bureaucratic rule at central and local Government levels; we must make a complete break in economic planning strategy from the pro-imperialist and pro-capitalist western model to a revolutionary social-oriented one. We must develop on independent economy free from foreign domination and sever all links with the imperialist-dominated and controlled International Monetary Fund. We must renegotiate and reschedule foreign debt payments, erase extravagance and corruption all levels, reduce the top-heavy bureaucracy at home and abroad, guarantee workers the right to control in decision making, in management of all enterprises; make a decisive shift in our foreign, economic and trade relations from the capitalist states to the socialist and nonaligned countries.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we have put forward these positive proposals to show how we see that this country can go forward.

Motion on the Approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for 1981 - In Committee of Supply: 4th March, 1981

Head 36 - Social Assistance:

[Question proposed that the sum of \$9, 280,900 for Head 36, Social Assistance, stand part of the Estimates.]

Subhead 7 – Old Age Pensions; Subhead 8 – Public Assistance:

Mrs. Jagan: I mentioned when I spoke in the general debate that it would be useful for us to know the number of persons who are in receipt of old age pensions because from the figures I arrived at, dealing with the amounts provided this year, and last year it seems that we are providing old pensions to approximately 18,000 persons for this year, because I notice the legend says, *"Increase in number of recipients."* So we can say there is an increase of 1,600 people in the age group 65 and above.

I would like to know what is really the percentage of persons in our society 65 years and above and with that we would be able to know if the old age pensions are really being spread properly amongst the age group that is entitled to the receipt of it. Naturally, we know that not every single person 65 and above will be receiving it, but percentage wise I would imagine in a country as poverty stricken as Guyana is, that the majority of old persons would have to be in receipt of the pittance we are now paying them and I am quite convinced that the number must be beyond the 16,000 to 18,000 that we are now giving.

I had mentioned earlier, too, in the debate that although you are now giving an increase of \$15 per month, raising the amount to \$45, it is still totally inadequate and again on behalf of my Party I wish to recommend that every effort be made to give an amount of pension which relates to the cost of living in this country because this bears no relationship at all.

Also, under Public Assistance we give \$2 million. Last year the actual amount was only \$1.8 million on the Revised Estimates which is pretty small and it is my understanding from the people I interview that it is done in a very stingy way, the way the applications are processed and the decision made as to who will get payment. There is certainly no openhandedness in assisting the thousands of distressed families who need help and as we all know, public assistance is not given to any able-bodied person and that is one of the horrors of any society that an able-bodied person, male or female, who cannot find work at the same time cannot get social assistance.

To get social assistance, a person must be disabled or under in some way, there is some variation on the theme. But it is at this point that Public

Assistance should be given the thousands of families that are destitute because of unemployment. Again I believe, having seen the number of pages of Estimates we have already passed through where millions are glibly and easily passed, that here we have an opportunity to assist those that are in very great need – not only physical need, they are in need of moral support – to know, Mr. Chairman, that the society in which they live takes some consideration of them and is showing some interest.

It is all well and good for us to give these two amounts for public assistance and old age pensions, but we are neglecting a very important section of our population that must be given help and I would strongly urge that the Ministry concerned give actual and real consideration to providing unemployment relief to those thousands of men, women and children who are suffering because of unemployment.

Division XX1: 1 – Ministry of Environment and Water Supply:

[Question proposed that the sum of \$10,706,000 for Division XXI:1, Ministry of Environment and Water Supply stand part of the Estimates.]

Mrs. Jagan: Subhead 4, Georgetown Sewerage and Water Commissioners: Rehabilitation. The amount of \$2.6 million is being allocated to the Georgetown Sewerage and Water Commissioners: Rehabilitation. I want to refer to the disgraceful condition of water and sewerage in our so-called Garden City. There is only one word that can describe the two and that is disgrace. Large areas of the city, just like the country, cannot get water anymore. Water is not being distributed throughout greater Georgetown. I can speak for myself. Where I live, if we can get water above the ground floor, one hour per day, were very lucky. We are right down to the stand pipe in the yard. We are all back to the lowest form of water supply. Well, there is one more, you can go to the trench because, already, in Greater Georgetown, there have been times when we have had to go to the trench with our buckets. But for urban areas not to have water supplies into buildings is evidence of the retrogression that is taking place generally, both in living conditions and in the environment, and general patterns of life in this country.

Instead of moving forward we are being pushed backward. Certainly, the sight of the horrible sewerage explosion that took place quite recently is an example of the lack of vision of those who are responsible. In urban areas disease travels so rapidly that I wish to warn those responsible that we stand in a dangerous position when our sewerage breaks out into what we saw recently, and where we cannot even provide proper potable water. Instead of dragging our feet on these things and talking about the Garden City, I think we have to recognise the sorry state of affairs and try to do something positive about it. I know what the Minister will say. He will tell us his usual thing about the fact of the matter is that the Ministry of Health

and the City authorities have been unable to carry us forward into the 1980s with better water and better sewerage and better environmental conditions.

I would like to speak on page 93, Subheads 11 and 15.

Nothing is there. Under Subhead 11, Grant to Infant Welfare and Maternity league, I would like to stress that I think a lot more will have to be done in this direction if we are going to improve on the infant mortality rate that exists in our society. Whether it needs more money, more attention or more personnel, that is the Ministry's job to find out, but the fact remains that our infant mortality rate is 54 per 1,000 live births and the mortality rate for gastroenteritis cases in children is 100 per 1,000 live children. What is even worse, the malnutrition mortality rate is 77 per 1,000.

This is something that we have to take very careful cognizance of because the work in our postnatal clinics is most important and must have further assistance. By that I mean that we should be able to provide free milk and vitamins and whatever else is necessary in the period of childhood that is the most dangerous, the early period, the first year, and the period when malnutrition raises its ugly head.

The Ministry of Health in the last few years has made various denials about the level of malnutrition which exists in this country, but the fact remains that malnutrition is a serious disease and I do not think that sufficient attention is being given to it.

Under subhead 15, Convalescent Home for Children, we are again for the umpteenth year providing the sum of \$40,000. Now, the Convalescent home for children is doing, I think, a pretty good job in taking off some of the load from the Government agencies. It is a service provided by the Red Cross, as I understand it, which raises funds and gets \$40,000 a year from the Government. With the rising cost of living, the need to pay higher sums of money for bedding and equipment and food and personnel I would strongly urge that this sum of \$40,000, which has remained static for a number of years, be raised to at least \$100,000.

May I speak? I want to make the point – I am not sure that the Minister realises that the Convalescent home is a home only for children and for children whose period in the hospital is up and they have no place to go. Their families cannot take them. I would suggest that the Minister visit the Convalescent home. He would get an entirely different picture.

Head 39 – Medical:

[Question proposed that the sum of \$8,100,000 for Head 39, Medical, stand part of the Estimates.]

Mrs. Jagan: Under this Head, I do not know if you will permit me to speak on Subhead 1 generally.

[The Chairman: We are not having a general debate.]

Mrs. Jagan: There are so many vacancies, if you want me to go one by one.

[**The Chairman:** You want to speak generally on vacancies? Is there any other item or Subhead you want to speak on or are you only dealing with vacancies?]

Mrs. Jagan: Only vacancies. I want to draw the attention of this Assembly to the fact that we have a dangerous number of vacancies of important medical officers. I do not think it is for me to tell you how important they are because they must be important if they are listed on the Establishment. I would first of all like to ask the Minister concerned how many vacancies there are for doctors of all types?

I would like to ask him if it is true that we have a shortage of Senior Surgeons, if it is true that we do not have a Paediatrician, that we do not have a permanent Ophthalmologist and if he could tell us how the health and medical personnel relate in Guyana? By that I mean what percentage of our medical and health personnel are in the field of preventative medicine and what number do we have in the field of curative medicine, because I sat in this Assembly since 1976, year after year, hearing the various Ministers of Health speak about the need for preventive medicine and the sad fact is that from what I understand – the Minister doesn't seem to like my statistics – my statistics are that only 10 percent of our medical staff are engaged in preventative medicine? But then he does not like my figures so I am quite willing to hear his figures on the subject.

I do know that in relation to the figures required of doctors per head of population, we are far below the amount set for the region in which we live. My understanding is that we have approximately one doctor for every 15,000 inhabitants and as far as dentists are concerned, we are far worse. I believe it is one dentist for about 75,000 inhabitants. I would like to stress the necessity for filling these various posts if we are to give the population of Guyana the maximum medical care they need. I want to stress in particular the question of the Ophthalmologist. There seems to be great confusion at the hospital. No one seems to know if there is one or there isn't. There was one part-time and he seems to have disappeared and there was a private doctor who was brought in part-time and he claims he is not working for the hospital. I would like a clear explanation because there are many, many people who need eye treatment, eye examinations, and they are all being forced to go outside to the one or two private practitioners. There is hardly any eye service in this country and this is pretty bad. So I would ask the Minister to answer me on these points and, particularly, the question of how many surgeons we have functioning at Georgetown hospital and New Amsterdam hospital.

Head 42 – Hospitals and Dispensaries:

[Question proposed that the sum of \$33,700,000 for Head 42, Hospital and Dispensaries, stand part of the Estimates.]

[The Chairman: Cde Jagan -]

Mrs. Jagan: Subhead 1 (71) – Medex. Cde. Chairman, one does not get much out of raising points here. On the last occasion I asked the Minister how many vacancies there were but he dodged the point. I think he did mention the Medex. But the Government seems to be depending mostly on its Medex to fill the vacancies that exist. As I said, the Minister could not answer the last question. He dodged it, but my information is that many persons going to the hospital are seeing doctors. They are seeing Medex and there are many examples of the faulty application of what is an admirable process, the introduction of Medex.

When the matter was raised here, the People's Progressive Party supported it as a concept which is useful and which is innovative, but one has to be exceptional cautious in the training of Medex and in the supervision of this type of medical personnel because they are not doctors. They cannot work as doctors. They have not the same training as our Dispensers which were a class all by themselves. The old time Dispenser, after a number of years in the rivers and in the various settlements he worked, became quite experienced. They were very exceptional people. The Medex are young, newly trained persons under a system which I say hasn't crystallised fully and so we are having a Medex without proper supervision meddling in matters that are not his preserve and making grave errors.

I have had a number of reports from doctors who have told me that they (Medex) have extended themselves in directions where they are not capable of performing and that can be the danger, the whole system of the use of Medex, if it is done properly, can be a great advantage to countries like ours, but when we try to have the Medex go beyond what he is trained for, we are going to have problems. That is why I would like to issue this warning that he is not a doctor. He is an assistant. He is one who will carry out, presumably, what the Dispenser used to do but I do not think his training matches that. But at the Public Hospital there have been many cases where because of the severe shortage of doctors of a number yet unknown Medex have been put in their places, and I don't think you should do that. I only issue a word of caution in that direction.

Motion on the Increase in Old Age Pensions: 27th March, 1981

[**The Vice-President, Public Welfare:** “Whereas section 8(1) and (2) of the Old Age Pension Act, Chapter 36:03, now provides as follows –

8(1) *The amount of pension payable to any person under and in accordance with this Act shall be –*

(a) *in the case of a person ordinary resident in Georgetown, thirty dollars per month;*

(b) *in the case of a person ordinarily resident elsewhere in Guyana than in Georgetown, thirty dollars per month.*

(2) *The National Assembly may from time to time, by resolution (which shall published in the Gazette), vary the amounts and any residential qualification prescribed by subsection (1) with effect from the date of the resolution or such earlier or later date as is specified in that behalf in the resolution.*

And where as it is proposed that Old Age Pensions payable under paragraphs (a) and 9(b) of section 8(1) of the Act be increased from thirty dollars per month to forty-five dollars per month with effect for 1st January, 1981:

Be it resolved that this National Assembly in accordance with section 8(2) of the Act approves that the amounts prescribed under paragraphs (a) and (b) of section 8(1) of the Act be varied from thirty dollars per month to forty-five dollars per month, with effect from the 1st January, 1981.”]

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition People’s Progressive Party, I wish to make some comments on this Motion before the Assembly. The Vice-President informed us that in raising the old age pension from \$30 to \$45 per month, they were seeking to assist old age pensioners and give them the money, if I may use his words, which would be the principal means of their subsistence.

The *Chronicle* newspaper, which is owned and run by the Government’s ruling Party, this morning said that this measure was in keeping with the new Constitution which directs that aged citizens should be allowed to live in reasonable comfort and dignity and it is in the context of the Vice President’s work and the words of the official mouthpiece of this Government that I wish to raise these points, that I do not think that the sum of \$45 per month can allow anyone to live in reasonable comfort and dignity or that

that amount of money could be the principal means of substance.

Let us examine what one can get with \$45 a month. I drew up a simple budget, I hope I do not bore the Members of this National Assembly but we should all be concerned with how our senior citizens live. If an old pensioner bought one pint of milk at \$4, two pounds of rice, two pounds of meat – and I am speaking in terms of a month allocation – two pounds of chicken, one dozen eggs, one small bottle of coffee, four pounds of provisions, one pint of cooking oil, two cakes of bath soap, two cakes of kitchen soap, matches, \$4 for electricity – of course, all my prices are unbelievably low because I do not suppose anyone in Guyana spends \$4 per month for electricity – kerosene for fuel, and maybe four pounds of sugar. That would take up \$45 per month.

I go to this trouble because I do not think that Members of this Assembly really appreciate what it is to live on \$45 a month. Of course, this does not include rent. We have to assume that an old person is bound to pay some rent. I do not know where there are any low-rental rooms in the urban or rural areas. Occasionally one can find them. That is a little more easily found in the rural areas. Even that is quite hard. It does not include rent, it does not include clothing or shoes - you cannot even get a pair of shoes for \$45. Greens, I haven't even introduced in a simple budget things like greens or the occasional house hold items, towels, sheets, what have you.

In other words, I wish to make the point that it is no use telling us that the Constitution directs that aged people should be allowed to live in reasonable comfort and dignity when this council or those who take the executive decisions cannot fulfil the terms of this Constitution. It makes the Constitution a mockery. The money is there. Close down the Ministry of National Development where you are wasting money, where you are using the money to run a political machine. Take that money and put it over in to old age pensions and we will have a better deal for old age pensioners. I am giving you the means, the ideas on how you can do it. It can be done.

Do you have to have our fathers or our fathers-in-law go to the Palms to die in such a waste? We do not want our relatives to go to the Palms when they cannot live on the meagre pension or when their children or their in-laws cannot afford to upkeep or take them into their homes. You know these days the feelings of family responsibility have changed. There was a time when the older people were secure in the family system but people have become urbanised and in the course of urbanization they are selfish, they live for themselves; their parents can go and die in the Palms, they do not care. This is one of the problems we face.

Many people will not take their fathers, mothers, grandfathers and fathers-in-law into their homes and care them and many of them, as you know, have to live outside of the security of the family and then they cannot exist on the \$45 a month. They have to end up in the Palms. We see it every day. Sometimes I see an old man or woman sitting with all they own, their rags and bits and pieces of cardboard, trying to survive under an abandoned

car, under a donkey cart. If you look you see it right here in the city of Georgetown and in the country. So that these are the problems which we should be concerned with and I do not think it is justice for the Vice-President to come here and merely offer \$45 per month.

I get a lot of correspondence from old people who protest that they cannot live on what they are being provided with. Some also cannot even get the amount provided by old age pensions, I have a letter here from an 80-year old man who has been applying for about 10 years for old age pensions. He says he wrote the Prime Minister four times and cannot even get a reply. The processing of many of the applications is so very long that many people did not get the opportunity even to receive the pittance. I hear many complaints about all aspects of old age pensions.

We're supposed to be providing the old people with free transportation. Many of them complain that the bus drivers won't stop for them or that they have no consideration for them when they try to board the bus. They treat them roughly because they say it's free. That should not be. Those in charge must look into these things. It is no use if we come here and we use such sweet dainty language about our citizens when the people working under us don't care a damn about them and aren't being helpful; aren't being kind and polite to them. I think this is the least we can do.

I would urge that we close down the Ministry of National Development and we transfer the funds over to social assistance.

Motion on the Creation of Guyana National Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union: 22nd June, 1981

[The Vice-President, Parliamentary Affairs and Party State Relations:

“Be it Resolved that the National Assembly of the Parliament of the Cooperative of Guyana approves of the creation in Guyana of a National Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union;

And be it Further Resolved that the National Assembly of the Parliament of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana constitutes itself with all the Members of the National Assembly as the Guyana National Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.”]

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, we have no objection *per se* to the Guyana Parliament becoming a Member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union but one must also learn by experience. And our experience in this Assembly in which we have been a Member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is not a very pleasant one in the sense that it does not function. We have no objection to our joining the Inter-Parliamentary Union but we do not want it to be another window-dressing operation as the C.P.A. has been.

We notice that the ruling Party has seen fit to block all attendance at fundamental meetings of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. We, on this side of the Assembly, are fully aware why the ruling Party has prevented attendance at the last few Parliamentary Association meetings, for the simple fact that it does not want the Opposition to tell the truth of what is going on in Guyana. So if this is going to be the case with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, we are just wasting some more time. So I ask, is this going to be the situation? Are we going to pretend that we are members but when meetings take place we will be kept from attending because of the fears of the ruling Party about what will be said?

I heard the speaker who moved the Motion talking about how this union supports the objectives of the United Nations. Well, he knows as well as all of us know, that the United Nations in its Declaration of Human Rights set out very clearly the importance of the rights of every country to elect a Government of its choice at free and fair elections, and there would be scarcely a soul left in Guyana who would say that I am not speaking the truth when I say there is no such thing as free and fair elections in Guyana, and that the Party which calls itself the Government is in fact the minority Party in this Assembly.

So, we would say, yes, join the Inter-Parliamentary Union if there is going to be meaningful participation. We are in support of meaningful participation, but we are dead against the cover-up that goes on, the fears that the ruling Party show whenever it comes to a point at which the “*monkey*

business" in the Assembly is going to be exposed. So I say, if we join, let it be meaningful participation and let us not sit back and waste any more money or any more time as we are doing with the C.P.A. The only time we hear about the C.P.A. doing anything is when someone gets it into his mind to send a letter that some delegation is coming. The last time the Association met, they got some letter that a delegation from the Peoples Republic of China was coming. We did not know anything about it. It just operates in a very strange and peculiar way. I must confess that I have a strong suspicion that this will also operate in a very strange and peculiar way and will function to cover up all the misdeeds of the ruling Party.

Motion on the Second and Third Readings of the Miscellaneous Enactments (Amendment) Bill 1981: 22nd June, 1981

[The Prime Minister: "A Bill intituled: An Act to amend certain enactments."]

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, this Bill before the Assembly today is a quite complicated, twenty-two page document, which we might call an omnibus Bill. It includes so many items, we can call it a potpourri or even further, a cook-up. Maybe cook-up describes it a little bit better.

When we consider the time taken by legal officers to prepare this document we tend to be astonished that so much time is put into something that on the whole, produces so little. We are told by the Mover of this Bill, the Prime Minister, that this is a Workers' Budget, and I presume this comes out of the Workers' Budget, and that this is a Peoples' Budget. Well, with those words, one would imagine that we would be getting legislation which would affect the people, which would help the people.

The speaker further went into a dissertation on democracy. He said the very democracy we enjoy is dynamic. There is no debate on that. He said they believe in genuine democracy and he also spoke about involving the people, and near the end he spoke about the adult suffrage, somehow relating this document to the right of the people to vote and to elect a Government of their choice. I happen to have the honour of being one of the only three Members of this Assembly to have been here in the historic 1953 Parliament which was elected on the popular vote of the people who voted in the first elections under universal adult suffrage for which we had fought and won.

I have seen the whole circle, the complete circle, from universal adult suffrage and the right of the people to elect a government of their choice to the present situation in which we are now, where people do not have the right to elect a government of their choice and where adult suffrage is a joke in this country. There is no such thing as adult suffrage. It no longer exists; even the dead can vote! I hope that I shall be able to see the circle move again in the direction of the attainment of free elections and the winning again of universal adult suffrage. I think to talk about democracy here, at this stage, is really a mockery. We cannot be in this Assembly and laugh at such a sublime concept as democracy which is being rigged and torn and thrown in this rubbish heap as happened so many times. It is a pity to have to listen to such rubbish but coming to this Bill, there are many things in it - some good, some not so good, some just a waste of time. Let me pick off the items.

Let us take matters that relate to those of us in the National Assembly: the two items that grant benefits to Members of this Assembly. I ask at this point, why in the name of God do we have to stand here and give Members

of this Assembly more perks and more benefits? It is a crying shame when the people outside are crying for better conditions; they want decent pay. All that this Government has been able to do is to raise prices, raise taxes, increase the amount of the devaluation of the dollar, but it has been unable to increase the income of the working people of this country. Why must we be called to this Assembly over and over again to talk each time about putting a greater squeeze on the workers as the next Bill will do for us and other Regulations before this Assembly will achieve anything. And now we come with this Bill, which those who prepared it could have far better spent their time in trying to think of something to ease the squeeze on the working people of this country.

Better conditions: if you have 12 years you are going to get a little more money, if your pension is due you are going to get a little more of this and that and it is in keeping with the tone of this Assembly which I brought to the attention of this Assembly – of course, I do not know if they paid attention because they do not care about anything. The first Act of this new Parliament was to give the Speaker and the Vice-Presidents more money so that every time an effort is made all that the effort is made for is to give those in good positions a little more. Is that what we are here for? It is a crying shame and everybody here should be ashamed of himself. They are straining at a gnat to swallow a camel.

We have before us all these little bits and pieces in here. In fact, for those who prepared them – I don't know how qualified they are but at least I would suggest amongst other things that they learn how to handle the English language. On page 21, paragraph 4. One sentence has 117 words. It is one of the longest sentences I have ever bumped into. On page 20, another sentence has 110 words and another has 69 words so that when you try to read the Explanation anyone who is not a lawyer, to read through 117 words in one sentence, you get lost, you don't know where it is stopping, semicolons are lacking. It is weird. It is an example of the type of things that come out of this Assembly.

I want to know why this Government is so intoxicated with putting forward nitty-bitty amendments to legislation to create even more problems. The Members of the Government will not get down to anything serious. The serious thing before the country, as I see it, is the question of helping Guyanese to survive after the onslaught. What is it the last speaker said? He was talking about a Workers' Budget, a People's Budget. I dare him to go along without security to Stabroek Market or Bourda Market to tell the people that the Budget is the People's Budget and it is helping them. I would like to see him go there, without first moving in and harassing all the people, and tell people to their faces, "*These taxes are a People's Budget; these taxes are to help the people.*" Good grievance, where are we? We are nowhere.

Section 12 of the Pension Act is another thing that we have here which makes provision for persons to be employed beyond their pensionable age.

Let me say this: I hope it applies to everyone right down the line and is not reserved for those privileged few at the top; that it is going right down to the smallest man. Let us hope that this is so. One never knows.

We see that under the Dependents' Pension Act we are now including the Guyana Defence Force. I ask a question. Unfortunately the gentleman who moved the Second Reading does not have the courtesy to be here to hear what is said. I would like to ask him: "*Have they consulted the Guyana Defence Force? Has the Guyana Defence Force agreed to come under the Dependents' Pension Act?*" I remember in 1978 when the International Monetary Fund Agreement was signed and when, under that Agreement, the IMF dictated that the Widows and Orphans Fund must be extended – and on the dictate of the I.M.F. it was extended – to teachers, to police, to nurses, without consulting them. This, of course, is the practice of this Government. It never consults people, it does what it pleases. So I would like an answer to these questions. Were they consulted? Did they agree? And I would like to ask another question: "*Is this another dictate of the International Monetary Fund? Has the International Monetary Fund said that the Government must extend the Dependents Pension Fund in order to get a larger amount of money and resources?*" As we know, they are using it for other purposes.

I see in this little document of miscellaneous potpourri that there is an item on Poor Relief. What is the item on Poor Relief? Is it to change the membership of the Local Board and to remove the necessity for the Chairman to be a public servant? There is nothing about the amount, nothing about the pittance of \$6.50 which is paid to people under Poor Relief. Not a word because they do not care about that. They just care about the form but not the reality, not much about the daily punishment of the people. Nowhere in this document do you see concern about that.

There is another item which calls for a Supernumerary Deputy Governor of the Bank of Guyana. Why all the trouble to have a Supernumerary Deputy Governor of the Bank of Guyana? More jobs for the boys? Or is it that they want to bypass someone? Who knows? Or is it to discriminate against someone who should be getting a particular job? Why will they trouble? Who needs another person there? You know as well as I do that it is totally unnecessary. Nothing is complex for the Government when it wants to push the boys into the jobs and create some fancy jobs with more and more perks because when you come down to it perks and more advantages are what this Government is providing, trying to keep the services and the armed forces quiet because it does not have any popular support. That is clear and it would be more clear if the Members of the Government went out and heard how people feel about these great democratic taxes and heavy loads that are put on the backs of the workers.

We have an item in here on Prison Reform, that is, that licences can be given to release prisoners who are serving a term of life imprisonment. I just wanted to mention that rehabilitation of prisoners is the real function of our prisons and certainly if prisoners are rehabilitated and appear, even

though they have been sentenced to life imprisonment, to be able to lead useful lives outside, certainly they should be released. But are our prisons at this stage and period in Guyana's history really carrying forward their function of rehabilitation? This does not seem to be the case. The prisons are over-crowded, not enough attention is being given and not enough aid is being given in trying to improve the lot of our prisoners and prepare them for useful citizenship. So I would like to throw in that remark hoping that when this section of the Act is used concerning the release of prisoners it will be done on a basis of persons being ready to come out of prison and lead useful lives and not be done for other purposes, perhaps political purposes. So we hope there will be some restraint on the use of this in the correct direction rather than abuse of it.

I would like to suggest that this Bill relates in no way to the question of democracy, to the question of involving the people, to the question of adult suffrage. It has nothing to do with any of these things that the Mover of the Bill spoke about.

I would only like to remind Members of this Assembly that the working people of this country will never agree that the Budget, the exorbitant taxes and the horrible burdens put on them are in any way acceptable to them.

The Government tries to pretend that people have accepted such onerous taxation and burdens. This, of course, is far from the truth. I would like to say that this Bill, in its totality, has little to offer and the Government would have done better to spend its time in something productive and in solving the grave problems of low wages and the horrible problems of unemployment.

Miscellaneous Enactment (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1981: 22nd June, 1981

[The Minister of Finance, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance:

"A Bill intituled: An Act to amend certain enactments."]

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, it is true that the contents of this Miscellaneous Enactments (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill have been the subject of discussion in this Assembly, but still we cannot avoid the necessity of persistently and constantly reminding the other side of the Assembly of the excessive burdens that these increased taxes and fees, etc., will place on the backs of the working people. In fact, in essence that was the point I made when I discussed the previous Miscellaneous Enactment Bill and the plea that instead of having a medley of amendments, that we concentrate on legislation in trying to improve the living standards of the people mainly by raising wages. But I am afraid "*me lord*" the Attorney General misconstrued the essence but perhaps although he uses the words "*comrade*" I don't think he really understands the meaning of it, or understands the plight of the working class in this county.

We think that this Miscellaneous Enactment (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill really is scraping the bottom of the barrel; the last drop that conceivably can be squeezed. One might get the impression that they use termites to bore through and seek out old laws that have been buried for many years to find more avenues for taxing the people. Certainly the termites that bore into the ancient legislation about fees for horse-drawn vehicles, dray carts, donkey carts – well, the modals of anti-working-class heroism will have to be placed on the chest of that great legislator, if it be one, who discovered this form of taxation.

We find it absolutely astounding in this day and age that a Government would seek to put taxes on horse-drawn carts, donkey carts etc. It is unbelievable, particularly when all we hear from that side of the Assembly in the energy crisis. Here you have vehicles drawn without having to produce the energy of gasoline. The only energy you require is a little grass which the donkey and horses use. Instead, you are taxing people who use this type of vehicle and who own this type of vehicle. It is preposterous. It belittles all the arguments made about the energy crisis. All you know to do is to put on more and more and more taxes so that our transport, our electricity, and all that depend on the use of fuel go higher and higher. And yet here are the simple men who carry timber, who carry goods of all sorts being heavily taxed. They should be encouraged. In fact I would suggest that all taxes be withdrawn in view of the energy crisis.

We have in this Bill increases on butchers' licence increases, and druggist

licences – every conceivable avenue of putting on more taxes. Also the little pleasures of life – there aren't many in this country – restaurant, liquor premises, etc., they are being taxed and that means the taxes on restaurants are not going to be borne by the owners of the restaurants, we all know that. It's the little man who goes in there and buys a chicken in the rough or a chow mein. He's the one who is going to pay it. Even in the field of leisure and entertainment, even that the poor man cannot enjoy with any relief.

The speaker who moved this Bill said that the money will be used for the development and security of the nation, which is a lot of rubbish. It is pure rubbish. It is not going to be used for any development. It will be used for more squandermania.

Motion on the Approval of the of the Estimates of Expenditure for 1982 Budget Debate: 2nd April, 1982

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to deal with some of the social problems arising out of this austere 1982 Budget. Many social problems have developed as a result of the poor planning, the mismanagement, the high prices, the shortages, the corruption, the extravagance and the exploitation which have heightened and intensified in the last few years.

One of the greatest social problems is housing. Mrs. Bend-Kirton-Holder who spoke yesterday must be complimented for making a heroic effort to make something out of nothing in relation to the subject of housing, but I believe that in spite of our being on two different sides of the House both of us as women agree that our people deserve to live under better conditions. Housing conditions in Guyana are atrocious to use a mild word. It is one of the major problems of the people of this country and the Government is doing very little to relieve the situation. It is not possible to find a low rental apartment in Georgetown and the environs in the vicinity of \$120 or \$100 or below. I know because many of my colleagues have been looking for such apartments and they do not exist: with an average income of about \$400 a month, which is relatively high, a worker cannot afford to pay so much for rent.

So what are the plans of this Government for 1982? Examining them dispassionately it is very little. 312 self-help houses, 61 rental apartments, 25 hire-purchase houses, 200 houses in Ruimveldt and they told us that 24 houses were completed in Ruimveldt and some others here and there which are beyond the resources of the working people. When we come right down to the nitty gritty details of total income, how much for food, how much for clothing, how much for medical, how much for electricity and so on there isn't enough money left in the worker's income to pay out the high repayments required for housing loans and so few workers can meet these repayments. I discussed this matter with many workers. It is impossible! The percentage of expenditure of the current and capital budget allocated for housing is the astronomically small figure of 0.46 percent. Not even a half of a percent! 0.46 of one percent of the expenditure of the total capital currently is that figure, and this is what the Vice-President who introduced the Budget calls "*housing priority*". It is nonsense! It can hardly be a priority if they are barely allocating anything to the subject. The plans enunciated in the Budget Statement are nothing, they cannot relieve the situation.

Obviously the Government is aware of the housing needs because in the 1972-1976 Development Plan, it had promised 65,000 housing units during a five year period or an average of about 13,000 a year. We all know what happened to those projections. Not even 7,000 new units were produced in the five year period and I include private housing which created more than

the Government housing. The result is what we have now in Guyana. We have the slums of Georgetown, in Albouystown, Tiger Bag, Werk-en-Rust, Kitty. We have the slums of New Amsterdam and Linden and the rural slums. Who spoke yesterday about the clearance of the Hope Estate slums and gave credit to the P.N.C.? What a short memory some people have! We brought the Motion many years ago in this Assembly for the removal of the slums at Hope Estate and for the building of new houses.

This was one of the very few Motions put by the P.P.P. that ever came to the floor of this House. It was approved but not a blessed thing was done until very recently. We brought it to the attention of this Government and they would do nothing. I remember after it was passed by this House and nothing happened. I remember leading a delegation to Minister Naraine who is a Vice President now and they said yes they will go ahead. Nothing was never done and all those people lived in the most horrible conditions all these years.

We see squatting in the sugar estates because the workers need homes. I don't see anything in the Budget about homes in the sugar estates. We have seen workers brutally evicted by officials of this regime. They have been thrown out and had their houses smashed to the ground, they were also beaten with sticks by police and officials. The Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund was created many years ago out of the struggle and the blood of workers. Money is taken from the export of sugar to put in the fund and it was this fund from the workers' blood and from the political guidance of our Party that was used for houses for sugar workers. This whole apparatus for housing has been ruined, destroyed and hands have gone into it and removed the money that was for the sugar workers. From an amount of \$799,196 spent in 1970 for sugar estate housing and that wasn't much, by 1979 it dropped to \$207,808. From 352 houses built for sugar workers in 1970 it has been reduced now to 44 houses for the year 1979.

Is it any wonder that workers have to squat because of the overcrowding? Overcrowding is a major problem for all workers and specially those who now have to keep their relatives, because where are the unemployed going to live? How will they pay their rents? Yesterday all the notices for dismissal went out. Let me compliment the Government on its most efficient operation in many years. It passed the Budget here on Friday and by yesterday the dismissal notices had gone out, very fast.

Overcrowding will be on the increase because the 6,000 workers and their families will have no place to live, some of them will leave the country, some of them might find jobs. But I guarantee at last a few thousand will have to park on their relatives because they would not be able to pay for rent. In order to survive they will have to rely on their families for sustenance. Surely the Government has made no provision to help those who are now unemployed. They receive April's pay to live on and that is it! This Government has not even given a thought to any form of unemployment relief. I spoke to one of the dismissed workers the other day. He had

worked in a Ministry. He was employed there for 20 years and he gets one month's pay for April, 1982. He had a wife and five children and he supports his father. I went into some details. He had an income of \$340 from this Government, not a very princely sum but at least he was surviving. He pays \$60 a month as rent. He does not know how he is going to pay the rent and he does not know how he is going to buy his food. He does not know anything. I said: "*Didn't your employers speak to you about redeployment?*" He said that no one said anything to him. They just gave him the letter and that was it. How will he pay for his electricity? What will he do?

I sat here yesterday and I listened to all the bad talk about the socialist states suffering equally from crises like the crisis that is going on in this country. This I know: In the socialist states workers pay somewhere between three to six percent of their income on housing and this includes water, electricity and gas. Food is heavily subsidized and they do not have to pay shocking fees to doctors to get attention. Our workers pay as much as 30 to 70 percent of their income on rent and now electricity is so high that in many instances it accounts for one-sixth of the total income.

I spoke to a worker the other day who visited a doctor. The doctor charged him \$50 for some pills and an injection. He did not even examine the patient. Of course, he gave the wrong diagnosis and the patient had to seek further attention. Such is the plight of the poor in Guyana who are told fairy tales about the free medical service but don't get a free service. They have to pay specialist fees, surgical fees, just to see a doctor. Drugs remain in short supply and they draw exorbitant prices at the drug stores. All of us know this. Sometimes you pay fifty cents for a Phensic. What can we expect as regards health when this Government spends 4.6 percent of the total Budget, both capital and current, on health? And yet the Members of the Government say they are giving these things priority!

The *World Military and Social Expenditure* publication publishes statistics for the four most developed countries of Caricom. It pointed out that Guyana spends the least on education and health per capita and the most on the military. Let me give the figures in U.S. dollars per capita. Barbados spends \$4 per person on military, \$158 on education, \$70 on health. Guyana spends \$10 on military per capita, \$46 on education and \$15 on health. Jamaica spends \$9 on military, \$79 on education and \$34 on health. Trinidad and Tobago spends \$11 on the military, \$140 on education and \$63 on health. So, of the four most developed countries in the Caricom, we spend the least on health and education and the most on the military. That tells us an awful lot.

As a result of lowering living standards and growing poverty, malnutrition is going up. The Pan American Health Organisation, P.A.H.O., reported that Guyana has the largest incidence of child malnutrition the English-speaking Caribbean. I was listening to the last speaker. He said that the people's standard of living has improved. What I am saying is that the people's standard of living is dropping and dropping rapidly. We know

that old age pensioners are suffering. How do you think they can live on \$45 a month? Even if they spent one dollar a day on food, that would leave them \$15 for rent, for electricity, for clothing and what not.

We know – and anyone here can tell me, particularly the women – no one can live in Guyana on a dollar a day for food. It is physically impossible! So what do they do? They rely on their relatives. But the relatives they are relying on are low income people on the whole, because the rich people do not take in their relatives. The richer they get, the less interested they are in their poor relatives. I have never seen any rich people, or people who are well off, taking their relatives in their homes but the poor man is the most generous man. When his father, his mother, his uncle, his brother, his cousin, need some place to sleep, they all crowd in on him even if he only has two rooms. These are things that contribute to the lowering standard of living, because if you have a family of six, for example, living on an income of, say, \$380 a month, maybe just making it, and then the mother and father of one parent, or, maybe, both mothers and fathers, cannot exist, the family has to take them in or has to shell out money to assist them. Poor people are very kind that way. I have learnt that. Therefore, by bringing in more people, with all this retrenchment, it means the children in the family are getting less than what they need. They are not getting the milk, the eggs that they need. How can you give every member of the family an egg if you have ten people to feed? That amounts to 10 eggs a day or 10 eggs every three or four days, or 10 eggs once a week. Eggs, as everyone knows, are very expensive.

Old folk need special arrangements for them to obtain their food, when items are in short supply. They cannot stand up in queues. I have spoken to many old people and they have asked me to come to this House and ask the P.N.C. Government to solve the problem because the P.N.C. created it. They say that they cannot stand for hours in the sun and would the P.N.C. work out some distribution system for old folk? I have talked to many old people. They have to go to the Post Offices to collect their pensions. Some of the Post Offices are demanding that they bring two witnesses to verify who they are before they can uplift their money. Also, when they go to uplift their pensions the Post Offices are frequently poorly administered and there is not enough money. I spoke to an old man who had to go to a Post Office four times to uplift his monthly paltry pension of \$45. So the old folk are asking if this system of payment cannot be improved because it is very hard on them.

The last speaker spoke of our improved living standards. Is that true? Where have we got? Everyone here knows that I came from the United States. I came here 39 years ago. I lived on the third floor of an apartment house and I used to get running water in the toilet, in the shower and in the sink. Now I have to use a bucket and cup over the past four years because I do not know what running water from a shower looks like. I don't see it except when I go abroad. That is the improved standard of living.

I can speak for myself but that is not enough because we know, for one thing, that buckets are very expensive. We know people who live in the country have to get a series of buckets. As soon as their children come from school they have to send them to fetch water. I do not know about all the improvements in the standard of living. I see the people's standard of living going down, down, down. Can a household buy a new stove? Can a household buy a new frying pan? Can it buy even mosquito nets? Members know that mosquito nets cost upwards of \$80 each. Every child should sleep under a mosquito net but how can a family buy the netting out of the restricted incomes and frozen wages which are now the order of the day. So the standard of living is falling.

We once had running water. We once had electricity. I need not tell you because I presume, unless you live in special areas, you know. It may be that Members on that side of the House do not suffer from electricity black-out but I do. I have to work in a very hot room without any electricity and very dark. For the last month or two there is no electricity for about a six-hour period and when I go home there have been blackouts and the refrigerator has melted down. That is the high standard of living that we are all enjoying! We go to the stores and the things we would like to buy, we cannot buy. Can a worker buy a frying pan? Can he buy six plates? He can't afford it. It would take such a chunk out of his monthly salary that he would have to do without food. So the higher prices for essentials and the freezing wages, and the retrenchment of thousands of workers create harsh conditions for living. This is a very important point, because it is one thing for people to enjoy a particular standard of living and then to cut down that standard of living. This is one of the reasons Guyanese are very angry today with how the P.N.C. has handled the economy, because they cannot live as they once lived before. I am not talking about going to hotels and dancing and discos and all that. I am talking about straight living where you can't buy sheets. A sheet for a bed is as much as \$60. A pillow case could be \$20 or \$25. How can you keep a house going? And I would say this: If it were not for the fact that Guyanese have generous relatives overseas, many of our Guyanese would be in rags and barefooted today because they can't buy the shoes, and they can't buy the clothes. The people of Guyana are being assisted to a great deal by the relatives who have left and who are assisting, in many cases supporting them in the country.

While the wages are frozen, everything goes up. The retrenched worker I spoke to yesterday told me he earned an income of \$360 a month. He pays a rent of \$60, he pays electricity of \$50. That is no joke. Fifty dollars out of an income of \$360, and also having to feed himself and his wife and five children. Electricity fees are now exorbitant. We are paying water rates. Our transportation has gone up. Fuels for the stoves whether it is kerosene or gas are hard to get and high-priced. It is a hassle for people to live. You have to go out and spend the half-day looking for kerosene. You spend about three days looking for gas. You have to spend hours trying to find a

parcel of soap powder or soap flakes. I am a housewife, I know. You have to go about ten different places and ask: Do you have salt today? No, none today. Well, forget about rice. Forget about flour. Forget about margarine. Forget about those things. But you can't even get soap flakes. You have to hustle all over the city if you want to buy a pound of salt. That is what life is. People have to spend their time on those things and they are worn out and frustrated. Look at our transportation system. It has been ruined. The Government admitted that they made a mistake. But what is the point of admitting that they have made a mistake? That is not self-criticism. They are just trying to pretend, we are telling all as it is and that is it, but they are not trying to correct it. Self criticism means to correct what you did wrong. They are not correcting anything. They scrapped the railway and now we are in trouble. We can't maintain the buses. They have no proper maintenance system. They can't get parts. Then the buses are all pulled off the road when the P.N.C. has a function and they have to rent a crowd. We have to say that they are renting a crowd because that is all they are doing, to try to prove that they have a lot of support. If they did not provide the buses for the people and take them off the roads, they would not get anyone at their functions. They know it as everyone else knows it. But the people are punished. I have seen hundreds of people stranded on the roads while the transportation system has been shifted to the National Park or whatever it is they are renting a crowd for.

In this Budget Statement not one word was said, not even a word was uttered about the problems of the Amerindian population of Guyana. The oppressed Amerindian population which is pushed right to the bottom of the social and economic scales. They are not second class citizens, they are third class citizens. Has the regime ever examined the startling poverty facing the Amerindians of Guyana? I do not think so. But we have, we know that there are many who live on cassava and salt that is when they can get the salt. They do not even send medicated salt to the hinterland, to the interior to stave off malaria, and that is why there is now an increase in the incidence of malaria. We know too, that there are various reasons why Amerindians react or the reaction is very rapid when they become ill. When disease hit them they die rapidly and one of the various reasons is -

[**The Speaker:** Five minutes more.]

Mrs. Jagan: Because their nutrition is so poor, they have no money. The Government does not help them. The Government has no system of supporting their industries. They have to buy goods, they come by air and are sold at exorbitant prices in the shops, that is if they have the money to buy them. There is no support to bring them goods on a subsidised basis by air to the city so that they can compete and they can be sold. There is nothing done to help them – forget about medical – there is nothing much there. They are hardly given any assistance, but there is no plan that I have heard

of to improve the economic status of the Amerindian people. They are the most underprivileged, discriminated, and persecuted people in this country. The social ills resulting from unemployment and poverty and lack of recreational facilities lead to increased crime, a growing exodus of our population, malnutrition and great dissatisfaction and frustration of the youths and people of Guyana. Mr. Chandisingh said that we are on a stormy sea in a leaking boat, and we should all hang on together to bring this ship to port. But who made the leaks? To get the people to bail out the water and man the sail and get the ship safely to port you need a new captain. One that can unite – not disunite the people. One that can inspire the people to work together for the common good of the nation and one who can chart the passage to port intelligently and cleverly. In this vital task the P.N.C. has failed. We need a new captain and crew and this, the People's Progressive Party can provide. We have the ability; we have the confidence of the working people. We proved that not once but twice.

[Applause]

Motion on the Approval of Estimates of Expenditure for the year 1982: 5th April, 1982

Head 39 – Ministry of Health: Georgetown Hospital

Mrs. Jagan: Page 95, Subhead 140, Senior Technician: I would like to know if the medical services are any closer to a solution of the problem of staffing doctors for those suffering mental diseases? I understand that one of the Psychiatrists attached to the Georgetown Public Hospital is leaving. If my information is correct, I am told that we have only one other Psychiatrist attached to the service at the Mental Hospital in New Amsterdam. Certainly, with the increase of mental diseases as a result of all the frustration and tension, I think that quite a bit of psychiatric treatment is necessary. I know from my own experience that I am amazed at the number of people I bump into who are suffering from various forms of mental diseases. Certainly I think the Minister knows the time required for each patient and certainly one or even two doctors cannot handle the situation.

Under the same Subhead we have Other Specialist Medical Officers of Health. I have asked the Minister on several occasions the question, is the service properly staffed with sufficient ophthalmologists? He always assures me that the Georgetown Public Hospital has great treatment for those suffering from eye diseases. I had to mention to him personally the other day that I have a colleague who went in for an appointment. He was never examined by anyone. He went in a couple of weeks ago and he now has an appointment for July. I had asked the Minister what happens if you have something urgently wrong with you because no one sees you, you have to wait on an appointment. We hear all the time that we have a Permanent Ophthalmologist. I think they tell us that sometimes there are two attached to the Public Hospital. That has never been my experience. My experience is that people have a very, very hard time to see the Ophthalmologist because one of them is a private practitioner and goes occasionally and the other one seems to disappear most of the time. I do not know if he spends two days at the hospital. But this is my information and this has been my experience in sending people for this purpose.

I also want to mention that one hears the People's National Congress Government constantly boasting about free medical services. Again I ask, are the services free? Is it not true that people have to pay medical fees for specialist examination? That has been my information, that the services are not free in many respects. Many patients have to pay specialist fees, hospital fees, surgical fees and at the Georgetown Hospital and another hospitals, inpatients and outpatients frequently have to buy their own drugs. This, of course, is a serious problem. I mentioned it during the debate on the Budget Speech, that the cost of drugs in the private dispensaries is some-

thing phenomenal. It is unbelievable what people have to pay for drugs. Therefore, when the Ministry of Health and the Government say and boast that medical services are free, they must make it a reality. I say it is not a reality until people can get services free. This also applies to other specialist services like x-rays. I am told by doctors that many patients now have to pay x-ray fees which are considerable. Perhaps the Minister could bring me up-to-date on these.

I also wanted to refer under Subhead 126 on the same page to the question of Maintenance and Custodial Services relating to the Georgetown Hospital. I believe those of us in this room who go to the Georgetown Hospital to visit patients would have to same experience I have when I go into the wards to visit friends – one of horror. I have learnt to breathe through my mouth; I cannot bear to breathe through my nose as the smell is so horrible. Like other people, I sort of dim my eyes because it hurts to see how ugly the interior of our hospital is. It is so ugly and when one looks at the beds and sees the horrible sheets, it is sickening. All the equipment is dirty, the walls and the floor, and when you pass the toilet it is unbelievable how –

[**The Chairman:** Yes, Cde. Jagan, where is that relevant to Subhead 126?]

Mrs. Jagan: In Maintenance and Custodial Services.

[**The Chairman:** That deals with Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled – Juniors, Apprentices and learners of Building Trades, Maintenance and Custodial Services.]

Mrs. Jagan: I am saying that the building of the Public Hospital is not being properly maintained. That is the point I am making. The latrines are not kept properly in order. The furniture and equipment are not painted; the floors are not cleaned in a way that gives one a feeling of hygiene and a feeling that things are sanitary. In other words, when one enters the hospital, one gets a most unpleasant reaction.

That is for the person who goes in for ten minutes or one hour. What about the patients who have to live under these miserable conditions? I am urging that greater attention be given to the maintenance of the Public Hospital, so that we the citizens who visit our friends and relatives need not be ashamed when we enter the building, knowing that much more could be done.

Page 96. Can I go on to 203 or are you cutting off at 161?

Under item 203 which deals with the dietary, I want to bring this to the attention of the Minister – I appreciate that they are trying to reduce expenditure. The revised estimates for last year showed \$1.87 million for dietary, but this year they have reduced it to \$1.75 million. I think that is impossibility because the cost of food has gone up considerably and I can-

not see a reduction unless it means people getting less in quantity or less in quality. The food costs from 1981 have risen considerably and it is only logical to assume that if food costs in general have risen then the amount required for 1982 would be higher not lower. I do know that with this recent shortage of flour and bread, patients have been suffering tremendously in many of the Hospitals. They are not getting proper food and the shortages have wrecked havoc in our public institutions.

I want to refer also to 301 which deals with Drugs and Medical Supplies and to point out again that there are shortages of drugs. I understand there is a grave shortage of vaccines. I understand too that the Government is importing drugs from Holland, drugs which have been refused by Medical Authorities in Curacao and Surinam. In fact, my information is that Holland is dumping drugs that are unsatisfactory on our market and I would suggest we show caution in respect to this.

I want to refer to something that I find a little odd, item 304 Office Materials and Supplies show an increase from \$60,000 last year to \$100,000 this year which I find a little difficult to understand, in view of the fact that essentials like drugs have been reduced by almost \$1½ million, the amount for drugs and the amount for dietary as I pointed out had been reduced, so why are Office Materials and Supplies going up? I want to mention too that the amount at 301 for Drugs and Medical Supplies is quite a drastic reduction, \$3.24 million last year to \$1.5 million this year. Does that mean that you have found a source of cheap drugs or is it that there will be fewer drugs available for our patients? That is an important aspect for us to keep in mind.

Motion on the Approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for 1982 In Committee of Supply: 5th June, 1982

Division 524 – Ministry Of Health

[Question proposed that the sum of \$15,444,000 for Division 524, Ministry of Health, stand part of the Estimates.]

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Chairman, Subhead 17, Georgetown Hospital Feasibility Study. There is a sum of almost \$200,000 to be voted for a feasibility study. To my recollection we have heard for many years about the building of a new hospital. We have been told that there was a lottery, the money from which was going to be used for the new hospital, but I do not see anything happening about the new hospital. Could the Minister tell us how much money from the profits of the lottery has gone over to the hospital and what are the prospects? What is the prognosis of having a new hospital for the City of Georgetown?

Motion on the Approval of Estimates of Expenditure for 1983 Budget Speech: 18th February, 1983

Mrs. Jagan: Cde. Speaker, I have listened to three of the Government speakers and I have yet to hear any of them express any concern about what is taking place with the ordinary man and woman in this country. I would like to take a look at the quality of life in Guyana, not at the problems in other capitalist states, but at how people once lived and now live in Guyana. To do this without any help or statistics from the Government which cleverly hides as much evidence of this nature as possible, we should look at people living around us, at children, at adults, many of whom are now unemployed, at old folks, and, also we cannot fail to notice a small but sinister appearance of a group of our citizens who have rapidly grown rich under the ever pervasive corruption, wheeling and dealing, now going on in this impoverished land of ours.

First, always first, are our children. They come into this world under harsh conditions, some unwanted, some pregnancies which could have been avoided if contraceptives were available. But even here the important ban is evident. Many mothers still lay two in a bed at the Public Hospital of Georgetown. More and more mothers are having their children from bodies that are undernourished and sickly. The beginnings do not augur well for many of this nation's children.

We would not disagree, in any way, with the slogan advocated by UNICEF, that breast feed is the best. It is of course the best. But many mothers cannot produce enough milk for their babies. Not only do the babies need supplementary feeds, but the mothers need milk and other nourishing foods during, in particular, pregnancy and lactation. But can they get it? Can they afford it? Milk is \$1.50 a pint and eggs are 80 cents each, to name just two vital necessities. Two of the ladies at the back are saying yes, but of course they are not poor.

They do not face the problem of having husbands who are unemployed, sons who are unemployed, nor do they face the problem of living without incomes or with incomes that are below a living wage. So special milk for babies, which hitherto was available, is almost impossible to buy, except on the black-market. Tinned powdered milk is for those with lines but not those in lines. Yet I saw a huge lorry full of milk going to the Police Coop on Robb Street. I ask, how many members of the general public will get that milk at the going price? It is a Police Coop and it might be said that police get first preference. He ends up buying on the black-market, he who is least able to pay such prices. So milk, so necessary to life, particularly to our children when they pass the breast-feeding stage, is a hard commodity to purchase at regular prices. The fresh milk is limited mainly to the city and environs if we take into consideration also the availability of repro-

essed milk coming from the Milk Pasteurisation Plan.

Because of the P.N.C.'s regime's short-sighted agricultural policy, it allowed a vibrant milk industry to almost disappear, to collapse, instead of building on the splendid agricultural foundations of the People's Progressive Party Government in the 1950s and 1960s, it smashed such vital industries, several industries, but mainly the dairy industry, which would have meant so much to all the people today.

It is true that, according to the UNICEF Report for 1982-1983, for every day of 1982 40,000 children died of malnutrition and infection throughout the world, but mainly in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Some Members on the other side of the Assembly will take solace in these statistics as they do for claiming that Guyana is not alone in its agonies. But that is little comfort when we know that we have advantages which many of these countries do not have. We have vast land space unused, we have a small population to feed, and we have enjoyed greater development, educational and health services during this century, greater than many other developing countries. But have we used these advantages well? To the contrary. Our education and health have been deteriorating progressively as have our agricultural levels which were, before the advent of the P.N.C. regime, much higher.

After Independence, the P.N.C. has little to blame but itself. Why, for example, should our infant mortality rate be the highest in the Commonwealth Caribbean? The Population Reference Bureau Incorporated in collaboration with UNICEF produced a 1982 World Children's Data Sheet which showed Guyana having a rate of 44 deaths of infants under one year of age per 1,000 live births. The next after us was the island of St. Vincent, with a rate of 38.11. According to the same report our child mortality rate is five per 1,000 population of children between the age of 1 to 4 years. Jamaica and Trinidad are behind us at three.

In a Public Report made in October by doctors of the Public Hospital, Georgetown, it was pointed out that in this malnutrition ward of the hospital many children were dying. The figure for such deaths at P.H.G. was 11 for the month of September alone. The Report said that the greater part of the malnutrition problem stemmed from frank malnutrition on a national scale. These six little words spell out the misery that affects infants, children, adolescents, adults and old folks in our society. Malnutrition is caused by the factors of unemployment, increasing cost of living, failure of wages to keep up with increasing costs, paltry old age pensions and lack of any positive help to pregnant mothers, infants and the unemployment of families. There is not even a national school feeding programme.

The quality of life in Guyana is steadily depreciating under the P.N.C. regime. Poverty causes many other ills besides lack of enough food. It means that more people live in slums, which in turn breed disease. The hospitals are no longer equipped to deal with the greater incidence of sickness in other community. The government Medical Services no longer can

supply the needed drugs, the adequate personnel and treatment. The drugs that are used are frequently expired and they are in short supply. The institutions are hit by shortages of water and electricity. Decent and sufficient food to serve patients is lacking and so is the staff required. The Health Minister will decry my attacks, as he did last year, but he was not telling the truth. I say again this year, there are not enough drugs to give adequate supplies to many patients. I refer to patients suffering from diabetes and hypertension.

We do not have enough beds in the hospitals to give patients. Many have to lay two in a bed in the maternity, surgical, medical wards etc., nor are there enough doctors to care for the population. We have approximately one doctor for every 12,000 inhabitants, yet the Ten Year Plan of the Americans calls for reaching the target of eight doctors for 10,000 population. In their report, the Georgetown doctors said that the shortage of basic drugs, medical supplies and dressings make meaningful health care difficult, if not impossible. They said that the laboratory services were frequently inadequate and inaccurate.

The operating rooms of the Georgetown Public Hospital have been in deplorable conditions. I don't know if the Minister has seen to the correction of the deplorable conditions, the filthy sinks, the rats running on the floor etc., etc. As practising doctors and *au fait* with conditions, these same doctors made these suggestions which should be taken seriously, if there is any desire to seriously improve conditions – more funds for the Public Hospitals and General Health Service – improved hospital food, committed effort to tackle malnutrition on a national scale, ensure the availability of basic drugs and supplies at all times, improve the laboratory services, improve the conditions and wages to nurses. These were their recommendations.

Administration is so bad that we had the terrible tragedy in Fort Canje Hospital where fifteen patients died under mysterious circumstances. That was six months ago, and all we have heard were weak little promises from the Minister of Health that and I quote "*in a short while an inquest will be held.*" The last time he said that was the 18th of December. What now Mr. Minister, please reply to this urgent question with a positive answer on when the inquest will be held?

In this, the 1983 Budget the persons responsible for its preparation have so concocted it that very little of internal importance can be defined. There is no way of telling about allocations of drugs, for hospitals meals, for other important requirements. I say, it has been deliberately camouflaged to cover up a mountain of wrongs and such diseases as malaria, which was eradicated long ago, is now again rearing its ugly head. I warned this Parliament before that greater care should be taken to control malaria in the interior areas and that the Government should see that the use of medicated salt is continued, but the Health Ministry knows too much, I suppose. The people are suffering particularly in the interior areas, which are mainly

populated by the Amerindian people who are getting a raw deal, particularly health wise. There is nothing much for them in our depleted medical centres in the Interior.

Housing gets worse and worse each year, with the P.N.C. regime apparently throwing that hat into the ring. No more housing development to speak of. The rural and urban slums grow, more buildings fall apart and there are fewer and fewer dwellings available for the low income group and the low income group is the largest income group in Guyana. The budget allocation for housing is as bare as Old Mother Hubbard's cupboard.

Need we remind the regime that slum housing not only leads to disease of various kinds, but to deteriorating social behaviour, more juvenile delinquency, more crimes, less discipline in the society? The sinews of our society are shredding apart – what once existed is no more and most of this can be accredited to the growing poverty and the prevalence of corruption on a wide scale. The Government gives no leadership; public behaviour is influenced by the new army of corrupt wheelers and dealers and get-rich-quick-off-the-back-of-the-poor and stealing from Government coffers and the army of pimps and pickpockets, gun slugging bums sponsored and nourished by the Governing Party.

A society's developing, in many ways, can be judged by its ability to get pure water supplies, primitive and backward societies use unsanitary water sources, and thus have greater accessibility to disease. Is this where we are going? Backwards all the time. Heavily populated areas which once enjoyed a pure water supply now do without water. Toilets cannot be used, housewives cannot wash the foods they use, they cannot clean their houses or wash their clothes. It is hard life, but I guarantee, and I speak to the ladies here, I guarantee that my parliamentary friends on the other side of the House have not been affected by the shortage of water. They live privileged lives.

Finally, I wish to speak on behalf of two badly served groups – our Amerindian people and our old folks. I repeat what I said last year in this House that the Amerindian people are the most exploited and the most neglected. Like the position of women in our society, they are the last employed at the lowest wages, the first to be unemployed and the ones who suffer the most in this land which was once theirs. What are we doing to help them? Nothing is the clear answer of the Minority Party. We say that a clear programme to help Amerindians improve their living standards, get jobs, provide social services, cheap transportation and equitable distribution of food and other scarce consumer items should be inaugurated. Even when they produce goods, the Government gives no help in transporting and helping them sell their produce. It is a shame.

And it is equally shameful the way the ruling party deals with the old folks. A paltry \$45.00 a month which would not keep a human being alive for a week is all they get. Even the \$45.00 a month is hard to get with all the monkey business that goes on with payment of the old age pension.

The quality of life that Guyanese once enjoyed is gone, thanks to the P.N.C. regime. It has made an abysmally dim picture of its dealing with the nation's social services, wrecking them one by one by negligence and lack of concern. There is no way out but a new Government, one elected by the people and for the people. Down with P.N.C. tyranny, corruption and mismanagement.

Question to Ministers - Question No. 4: 8th December, 1983

Mrs. Jagan: Cde. Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister of Health Question No. 4 standing in my name.

“Question: Will the Minister say if he is aware that Guyana has the highest infant mortality rate and the highest child death-rate in the Commonwealth Caribbean?”

[Minister of Health: Cde. Speaker, Question No. 4 refers to the Infant Mortality Rate. It is not true that Guyana has the highest infant mortality rate in the Caribbean. As a matter of fact, the latest figure we have is 33.5 per thousand. This is the second time I am answering this question and I would like to just explain a bit to the Assembly that in order to lower the infant mortality rate we need the involvement of everyone so as to promote the programmes of breast-feeding, oral rehydration therapy, child-spacing and the lowering of teenage pregnancy. This involves the efforts of everyone.

I would think that the Minority represents approximately 15 percent of the population in this Parliament, and I think that instead of constantly referring to the figures they should seek to assist the people that they represent in trying to carry out the programmes to lower the infant mortality rate.]

Mrs. Jagan: I cannot accept the Minister's explanation. I have here a World's Women Data Sheet of the Population Reference Bureau Inc., in collaboration with UNICEF which states clearly that for 1982 the infant mortality rate for Guyana was 44 percent, for Trinidad and Tobago it was 26.4 percent, for Dominica it was 19.6 percent and for Barbados it was 25.1 percent. All of these figures, which are official figures, state that Guyana's infant mortality rate in the year 1982 was the highest in the Commonwealth Caribbean. I am prepared to let the Minister read this but I am not prepared to have false information given in this Parliament. I object to it.

[Cde. Van West-Charles: I said the latest figures. May I make a point. You cannot make a comparison with a small island like Grenada with Guyana. One has to examine the conditions that exist and the causes for it. As a matter of fact, what we are doing now in Guyana is, seeing that Guyana has been regionalised, we are looking to see in which region we find the highest causes for the infant mortality rate and trying to invest and put the resources in that particular region. We are now looking at the statistics and will approach the matter in an objective manner. One of the things is to

ensure that women who are pregnant attend the clinics. That is one of our main problems in Guyana.

Secondly, we have the immunisation programme and, thirdly, the oral rehydration therapy programme which is ongoing. It is up to you. You are also to be involved in the programme.]

Mrs. Jagan: May I again repeat the question I asked? Will the Minister say if he is aware that Guyana has the highest infant mortality rate and the highest child death rate in the Commonwealth Caribbean?

[**The Speaker:** He said no, but he went on to give some reasons. He said as at present that is the information he had.]

Mrs. Jagan: In one year?

[**The Speaker:** I am not going into dialogue of who is right or wrong.]

Mrs. Jagan: Cde. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health Question No. 5, standing in my name.

“Question: Will the Minister say whether medicated salt for the control of malaria is still being distributed to people in the border areas of Guyana?”

[**Cde. Van West-Charles:** Cde. Speaker, this question relates to the distribution of medicated salt. The answer is no.]

Mrs. Jagan: May I ask him why is medicated salt not being used since we know that it is one of the best means of preventing the spread of malaria, particularly on the border areas? It is very important.

[**Cde. Van West-Charles:** Here again Mrs. Jagan is misinformed. In Guyana there are two types of malaria. In Rupununi we have both types and in the other areas it is the Vivax. For some time, since 1960, medicated salt was used in the Rupununi but this was curtailed as a result of the growing resistance being experienced not only in Guyana but throughout the world.

In relation to the use of medicated salt within the North West and the Pomeroun, this was used up to 1982 and withdrawn. This is on the advice of the World Health Organisation; that after having used medicated salt for some time there must be a withdrawal period. In Africa and Asia they have begun to experience the resistance of Vivax because of the use of medicated salt.]

Mrs. Jagan: What precautions are you taking to eradicate the two varieties of malaria?

[Cde. Van West-Charles: During 1982 a P.A.H.O. Consultant was down here and together with our specialist we visited both areas. We did studies and the plan is to carry out an extensive programme of spraying the villages and all the houses in both the North West and Rupununi areas. We have also spoken to the airlines, both the state and the private airlines, about spraying their aircraft after having visited malarious areas.]

Motion on the Working Conditions of Domestic Workers: 26th April, 1984

Mrs. Jagan: *“Whereas the Campbell Committee was set up and reported some 17 years ago on conditions of domestics and made positive recommendations for improvement of pay, hours of work and conditions of work;*

And whereas since 1977, former Labour Minister W. Carrington had promised to recommend an 8-hour day for domestic workers, improved pay and other conditions of work;

And whereas the Government of Trinidad and Tobago on December 20, 1979, published an order for “Minimum wage and terms of service for household Assistance” which provides for a 44 hours – 6 day week, vacation and sick leave and wages for full-time, part-time and itinerant household assistance reaching \$70.00 per week for full time employees in 1981, with provision for overtime pay;

Be it resolved that the National Assembly recommends the immediate drafting of legislation to provide for minimum pay, maximum hours and other matters relating to working conditions of domestic workers.”

Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name. May I proceed?

[**The Speaker:** Yes, please proceed.]

Mrs. Jagan: I want to go back some years to get the full picture of the problems of domestic workers in Guyana. Some thirty-odd years ago the then British Guiana Labour Union under Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow worked in the direction of organising domestic workers. In that effort I worked with Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow. We had many sessions in which we attempted to organise domestic workers so that they could fight for better conditions. As you can imagine conditions now are bad but then they were appalling. I would say that through these thirty odd years there has been efforts, off and on, four different Associations for domestic workers had been formed. One or two Unions have attempted to organise the workers but because of the nature of the employment, because domestic workers are employed by single employers and generally they are the only employee, it has been a situation where the risk of domestics in taking militant action and working together has never properly materialised.

When I was Minister of Labour, we passed legislation including domestic workers under the Workers Compensation Act and later in the holidays with pay. In 1966 following shortly on the heels of the general elections,

when the P.N.C. in one of their election pictures had said that they would deal with the question of domestic workers, a Household Service Workers Advisory Committee was set up on November 6, 1965. The Committee headed by Lucille Campbell and including May Rodrigues, Magdna Pollard, Clementina DaSilva and representatives of workers and representative employers gave their report in 1966 and it was laid on the Table of this House on March 14, 1967 and, therefore, onwards it was stuck in a pigeon-hole and all efforts from 1967 onwards to get any action as regards the implementation of this Report had to a greater extent than to a lesser extent failed.

The terms of reference of this Committee were to enquire into conditions of employment and wages of domestic workers in private homes, Guest Houses and Hotels and to make recommendations for improvement of same. I would say they were relatively good recommendations, at least on which there was an area to work for the betterment of conditions, pay and hours of work for domestic workers. They had recommended an 8-hour a day, exclusive, with time off for meals.

I wish to make this point in relation to the legislation that was later moved in 1980 which does not make that small point that the 8-hour a day should be exclusive of time off for meals. I do not think that is explicit. The problem with this legislation of 1980 is that there are many things which are not explicit. The recommendations of the Campbell Committee also included overtime, annual leave and one that has also been neglected by the same legislation of 1980 - the question of sick leave. No one has taken into consideration the need for sick leave for domestic workers, but yet in 1966 this Committee was advanced enough to suggest that there should be 14 days sick leave a year after one year's service. The Committee also recommended maternity leave, four weeks with pay exclusive of the twelve days for vocation leave and that would be after three years' continuous service.

They also made other proposals which again did not fit into this. If I may just make a brief reference to an Amendment where he says that this Bill dealt with conditions of service, it does not deal with conditions of service, it does not deal with matters like uniforms, protective clothing, accommodation etc.,.

There are other aspects of conditions of employment which this dealt with but which the Bill did not deal with and therefore, it would not be correct as he puts in his Amendment to say that they dealt with conditions of work. There are many other things which it should have dealt with but did not.

On the question of wages of course they are totally irrelevant at this stage, they bear no relevance to the present, so all I can say is that they made efforts to set out wages for domestic workers and they took into consideration the hotel rates.

There was another recommendation that I found very interesting. They suggested a National Insurance Scheme and I quote from the words they

use because it gives much food for thought in view of the lack of such provisions in our present scheme of things “to secure themselves against temporary unemployment”. In other words the Campbell Committee say the need for a National Insurance Scheme that would assist persons who are in unemployment and as they put it here “temporary unemployment” because we know as a fact that domestics frequently move from one employer to another. Yet our own N.I.S. does not provide for unemployment relief of any type. So that the Campbell Report which was finished eighteen years ago – I have had it here seventeen years because I submitted my Motion to the Speaker on March 18, 1983 which was a year ago, and it was published in July, 1983. So actually, it is eighteen years since the Campbell Committee reported.

I wish to reiterate a point I made when the legislation concerning Household Service Workers came up. I made the point that it was not for want or lack of reminding the P.N.C. regime about the Campbell Report over and over and over again. Repeatedly in this Assembly and in other forums the call for the implementation of the Campbell Report was made but there was absolutely no response. However, in 1977 according to a report I have, the then Labour Minister, Winslow Carrington, said this:

“He spoke to a one-day Conference of the Women’s Advisory Council of the Guyana Trades Union Congress at Critchlow Labour College. He said that shortly he would be making recommendations to improve the wages and conditions of employment of domestics in this country. That was a promise he made at a Conference of Women Trade Unionists in March 1977. So, again, a public promise made by the P.N.C. Government was thrown by the wayside or put into cold storage.”

In October 1980, on the eve of the elections, when the Parliament had already been dissolved and when there was a Transitional National Assembly, the Minister of Labour brought forward the Household Service Workers (Hours of Work) Bill and quickly got it through Parliament because it was published in the *Official Gazette* on the 11th October and it was immediately brought to the Assembly and passed on October 24th.

This Bill, although it had some good features, was not really adequate, as I pointed out when I spoke on the issue. It dealt only with hours of work. That is good, yes, but the hours of work should have been tied up with the question of minimum wages and other conditions of service. As I pointed out before, the question of sick leave, the question of uniforms, the question of accommodation, whether meals are provided or not, what is the value of meals, the legislation should have covered these. All these details are not included in the Bill and therefore, in the opinion of my Party, the legislation was inadequate. As the election campaigning was going on, it was merely to show that an effort was being made by the People’s National Congress to do something for the domestic workers who had been neglected all the previous years.

Some of the weaknesses of this piece of legislation are apparent. I would ask the Minister to give us some positive information when he speaks on some facts which put it into the legislation, facts that make it real legislation and not just paper legislation. The law calls for a register to be kept by every employer. The register is to contain a record of the wages and hours of work of every household service worker and is supposed to be examined by officers of the Labour Department. I would like to ask the Minister approximately how many registers actually exist in Guyana and how many inspections have been made since the law was introduced in 1980. If he tells me that several thousand inspections have been done I would accept that as reasonable but I have doubts because I have not yet heard of any prosecutions under this law. I have not yet heard, through the grapevine, of people being visited by members of the staff of the Ministry of Labour. I could be wrong. I hope the Minister has some very good statistics to give us on these weaknesses.

I also notice that the Minister has the power to put meat into the law by passing regulations. I cannot recall seeing any regulations having been made in relation to this. In my Motion I have referred also to the situation in Trinidad. I am not suggesting that we do exactly what Trinidad is doing as regards legislation for domestic workers, but I am suggesting it as a very fine model of what can be done in a very simple way. When I spoke in 1980 on the Household Service Workers (Hours of Work) Bill I made the point that on one single page the Trinidad and Tobago law is fulfilled. It explains fully who are household workers, which the Bill does not even deal with. It sets out very clearly the wage structure which they gave for 1980 and then they also gave an increase in 1981. For example, for a full-time household assistant for 1980 the wage set out in the law was \$55 a week and for 1981 the wages would have gone up to \$70 a week. I regret I do not have any updated figures on this to know if they have gone progressively up every year or every other year.

The Trinidad law also set out the wage structure for part-time employees and for itinerant household assistants. It also includes the hours of work very simply without a whole lot of paper. It is stated in a couple of lines. In the case of Trinidad there is a different schedule of hours. There is a 44-hour week instead of a 48-hour week. For a six-day week the law sets out very clearly the vocation leave entitlement, which is 14 days. The law does not use a lot of words. The sick leave entitlement is 14 days. Other matters are listed. On one single page the Trinidad law ensured the rights of domestic workers, without a lot of fuss, and that is the reason why I introduced it.

I am not suggesting that we do what Trinidad has done. I am saying it is a very fine model. If you ask me I could sit down and in two hours give you the whole legislation on this pattern without waiting for another umpteen years which will happen if you say that your officers in the Attorney General's Chamber are busy preparing other legislation. It will not take much

intelligence to draft legislation if one follows the Trinidad formula. The main thing to be done is to protect the workers and not to wait year after year before anything is done about it.

The Motion that I have presented today seeks to tie up wages and hours of work as a total entity. I am quite aware that we had a piece of legislation in 1980 but I think the correct way is to adopt the method used by the Trinidad Government, that is, to tie up the total thing of wages, hours of work, sick leave, conditions pertaining to accommodation, meals, uniforms so that everything is in one package. Then you see that the law is enforced. That is one of the main things. We have to remember that, in a society like ours with very high unemployment, the women will find it most difficult to obtain employment. Therefore more and more women are relegated to the type of work which is not considered in a favourable light. Women are then relegated to domestic work, to working in the sugar fields, to working in shops, to doing work that other people do not want to do.

Because of the high unemployment in this country, generally speaking – I am not saying that some women do not reach the top in their profession and all that, a single example will exist in any field – the conditions of women seeking employment are rough. Nowadays with the frozen wages and the unbelievable high cost of living and services, every single thing has gone up. Particularly with the devaluation of the dollar, everything has gone up. It, therefore, means that households now have to have more than one wage earner. Workers cannot live on one income. I think that is an acceptable fact. I do not think anyone will challenge it. They cannot live on the income of one worker, and therefore, it means that the wife has to go out and find work. Many women end up, whether they like it or not, whether they have greater talents or training, as domestic workers. Perhaps because that is the easiest work to find. But they are not really protected in this work. I have sought for many years to try to get this Assembly to pay attention to the Campbell Report and to use it as a basis of starting off to give maximum protection to this category of women.

The State Paper on the Equality of Women which was presented to this Assembly in January 1976 has severe shortcomings because we are dealing with the rights of women and the most fundamental right of a woman is the right to earn a decent living. Her economic conditions come first. All the others can come later. But her right to eat and her right to live come first. We also have to take into consideration that many women head single households for various reasons. It may either be because of death, divorce, sometimes out of her free will or whatever it may be, many women have to head households. How can they live unless they have the right to earn a living? Our women are not being given this right. The State Paper does not properly deal with the basic economic problems facing Guyanese women. We are nearing the end of what is called the Decade of Women. Ten years ago the United Nations set out the prospect of devoting more and more attention to the rights of women, and we come now to the end of that dec-

ade and I would like to ask if the Guyana Government can honestly say that it has done something positive to lift that status of women, to lift them out of the burning poverty in which they are found? I would say no! The women of Guyana are worst off today than they have ever been.

[Cde. Johnson: No, that is not true.]

Mrs. Jagan: I think you are wrong. I think women are suffering as they have never suffered before and I think it is time that we introduce reasonable minimum wages. I should use the word a 'living' minimum wage, which at this stage does not even exist for male workers. But I say let us see at this period, at the end of the United Nations Decade for Women if something positive can be done for domestic workers who form a very large segment of Guyana's working women.

Mrs. Jagan: (Replying) Cde. Speaker, having given consideration to the amendments moved by the Minister of Manpower and Cooperatives, I would say that some of them could be acceptable. There are two points I want to ask the Minister to consider. I want to know why in the Resolved Clause the word '*immediate*' has been removed. This is sinister. We waited from 1966 to the present for some consideration to be given to this matter. Another Minister, Cde. Carrington, in 1977 made a promise and did not fulfil it until many years later. I think he was out by then. One does not know. The present Minister may not be a Minister and if he does not use the word '*immediate*' the promise may not be fulfilled. I think he should be man enough to leave the word '*immediate*' or include the words '*very early*'. He should not leave it bald because it suggests that it is going to be ducked again and that it will sit for a number of years. The fact that the word '*immediate*' is being deleted is significant. I would suggest that if he does not want to use the word '*immediate*' at least he should use a word that recommends that drafting should begin very soon.

I still do not agree with the statement that the Household Service (Amendment) Bill deals with the conditions of work. He says there is legislation to cover hours of work, overtime, the register of wages and conditions of work. Perhaps he can tell me what conditions of work he had in mind when he used the phrase. I suggest that the words '*conditions of work*' in the last line be deleted and that the words '*some other condition*' be inserted.

I reply now to some of the points the Minister made. I do not think it is seemly for the Minister of labour to give that sick old excuse about introducing laws to protect domestic workers, the excuse that there is difficulty in enacting it and that there are problems in that respect. The fact is that the Minister has a duty to domestic workers to give them the protection of legislation.

In relation to the questions I asked about the use of registers and about

the hours of work being implemented, I give notice now, since the statistics could not be given today, that I am going to table a question in this Parliament asking for specific information. I do hope that it will be dealt with within a short space of time as should be the case with Parliamentary Questions. My colleague Cyril Belgrave had to refer to a Question which he submitted to Parliament in 1978. In 1978 he asked: "*When will legislation for minimum wages for domestics be implemented?*" I think he is still waiting for an answer. I give notice that I intend to ask specific Questions because legislation without teeth is just paper. It is just fooling people and means very little. That is why I have doubts that the 1980 law is for real. I wish it was but my instincts and my observations tell me it has not been for real. I give the Minister an opportunity to prove himself by giving specific answers as to how many visits have been made, how many registers they estimate exist and if any prosecutions have been made.

The Minister boasts about his interest of his Government in the conditions of women and he says much has been done. However, I would take it not as a personal matter of any abhorrence of me personally, but as a sign of disinterest on the part of the leading Members of the Government that there is only one Minister sitting here on the whole Front Bench and that Minister has to be here to Table some Motions. That indicates a lack of interest of women's affairs, in fact, in the affairs of poor women because they are domestics. Domestics have no social status, domestics are ordinary working women but not one of the Ministers of this Government who sit on the Front Bench has enough interest in what is going on today to be present. That gives me an indication of how the Government respects the problems of working women.

I would like, in closing, to read an excerpt from a report by the Women's Progressive Organisation to the World Congress of Women which was held in October 1981 in Czechoslovakia where they were speaking of conditions of women in this country. The report repeats one of the points I have made and makes them clear:

"On the whole, job opportunities for women are limited to the menial and the lowest paid. The main reason for this is the general high unemployment which exists in Guyana, and which hits women workers the hardest. Equality for women at work and equality for job opportunities are always limited by unemployment with the general formula that women are the 'last hired and the first fired'.

Thus the high unemployment in Guyana, which ranges up to 30 percent - the Government will not divulge the real figures - severely limits job opportunities for women. The main employment of women then is in the most undesirable fields - domestic servants, shop clerks, waitresses and hotel employees, field work in the sugar industry and sweat labour in the garment industry. In the professions, women dominate in nursing, and, arising out of historical reasons, in the teaching profession. Women office workers, mainly typists, in the Government service and in the private sector, also predominate."

It makes the point that the basis of women's rights is the right of women to earn a living, the right of women to have good economic conditions, to be able to buy the necessities of life, to be able to have running water, to be able to cook with stoves where the fuel is available, to be able to have a steady supply of electricity and all the amenities of life which we expect at this time.

I would say that the Government of Guyana has a long way to go. The yeah, yeah, yeah and the claps do not make the real point that women do not have a fair share of what is in this country today.

Motion on the Second Reading of the National Security (Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment)) Bill 1985: 24th June, 1985

Mrs. Jagan: Cde. Speaker, since it is another cursed debate now I would expect that the other side of the Assembly would have something to say at this stage. However, I would like to support the last speaker when he said that the National Security Bill is profoundly oppressive. It certainly is profoundly oppressive. We on this side of the Assembly think, while the National Security Bill is being introduced at this time it is to intimidate, to threaten certain persons in our community who are already threatened. This is a more positive form of threat to say that Sibley Hall is there, you behave badly! I have heard that one many times. At that time they were trying to sell the People's Progressive Party through the back door. They are building now and Sibley Hall is careful. Now the ruling Party is looking in the direction of the T.U.C. leadership. This Bill is to intimidate and shut up the opposition that is coming from new directions. There is no other reason because there is more threat. What we need in Guyana at this time is not the National Security Bill, we need legislation to improve the National Insurance Scheme, to remove the means test for old-age pension, to change and improve the income-tax laws, to introduce severance pay for the workers, to bring in anti-corruption legislation, to update the divorce laws, to bring in anti-discrimination legislation, to bring in legislation for municipal and village elections, to remove the oppressive tax laws, and to change the electoral legislation which permits you on the other side of the Assembly to sit there and in large numbers.

Just remove these laws and see how long you will be there. We know about the National Security Legislation because in the history of Guyana only members of my Party have been held under this Act. Once they made an error in 1964 and by mistake put a man who was a member of the People's Congress and he was out in a flash. In 1953 – 1954 the colonial powers used on two occasions the laws of detention to put freedom fighters fighting for independence, in detention. Some of them were there for very long periods and in the 1960s the colonial powers put into detention many members of my Party including two Members of the Government. So we know how this Bill will be used. We know the way the wind blows. We are concerned. As the last speaker said, we must be concerned when we hear people emitting sounds about human rights and freedoms. Then we know there are grave faults in our direction.

We do not have free and fair elections although we are supposed to have them under the Covenant of the Human Rights and under the Declarations of Human Rights of the United Nations. We know we are supposed to have freedom of expression and freedom of the press but it is adulterated by the various misuses of legislation like licences for the importation of

newsprint, etc., and the absolute control of the media by the Government. We know that arrests and searches are predominant and we know that torture has taken place in our jail. Here, the Minister of Health should have examined those persons who were grossly injured when they were thrown in a cell with biting ants. I am amazed that anyone on the other side can skin his teeth when there is talk of torture carried out by their Government. I have seen Amerindians who had hot irons put on their backs. Laugh at that and let me see how funny you are. You can laugh when you know there are children in the hospitals suffering from malnutrition. You have scabs breaking strikes and you force Public Servants to go in the fields to work. You would not even allow a Member on this side of the Assembly, one of my colleagues, to travel in his own country. He cannot travel in the country of his birth. They will not allow Cde. Harry Nokta to travel to the Rupununi. He lives in Guyana.

In our Constitution, it is stated that no person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner. We have all the things in the Constitution but nothing is adhered to. Who can say there is no discrimination in Guyana? They dare not stand up and say so because discrimination is widespread in the country. In other words, the guarantees of human rights are not fulfilled in any decent way, or in any way for that matter, and now you are adding one more nail to the human rights coffin, the nail of the National Security Bill, totally contrary to the Covenant of Civil Rights of the United Nations.

I say that the National Security Bill should be withdrawn. If the other side of this Assembly had any conscience they would withdraw it because it is a shame. We know that they do not have the guts to withdraw it because they have particular reasons, to intimidate and terrorise those who do not agree with them. That is the intention. Whether it will be used for now, we will see. But I say it is a profoundly oppressive law and one day the author of this legislation will regret it.

Question to Ministers - Rental of Belfield House: 4th March, 1986

Mrs. Jagan: Question No. 15:

“(1) Is it true that the Government has rented Belfield House, East Coast Demerara, from the owner, Ms. Burnham, for the use of Mr. L.F.S. Burnham up to the time of his death in August, 1985?”

(2) If so, will the Prime Minister state what the rental was and for what period it was paid?

(3) Will the Prime Minister state the total sum of money expended on improving security and other developments at Belfield House?”

Cde. Speaker, I beg to ask the Question standing in my name concerning the rental of Belfield House

Motion on the Approval of Estimates of Expenditure for 1986 – Budget Debate: 7th March, 1986

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, I am constantly amazed in this House when I listen to the rosy picture of everything from agriculture right to the gamut of life in Guyana. From the other side of the House everything looks so good and rosy, but all one has to do is just walk a few yards from these Public Buildings and you will see that all is not so well. The country is in chaos, economic turmoil is the order of the day. One has to go, maybe, just a quarter of a mile in this city to see the follow-up from the present fuel crisis which is only one of several crises that this country has faced and is facing and I predict that this is only the tip of the iceberg for what is going to come afterwards. This Budget has brought no ease whatsoever to the people, neither physically nor mentally or psychologically. All we have are more and more burdens hanging around the necks of the people. Mr. Kwayana brought out some very important figures which illustrate this point very carefully when he showed that the wages have increased only 52.6 percent from 1978 to 1986 while the indirect taxation has gone up 175 percent. This looks like a tax free Budget. I sat on this side of the House for a long time. Every time we come up with a tax free Budget or a Budget with maybe a few taxes, all we have to do is wait a few weeks or months and we get it. Taxes never seem to come with the Budget but they come outside the Budget. We have no satisfaction from any Member on the other side of the House as to what is the future and what is the solution of this dangerous fuel crisis which is pulling the country down into stagnation. Look at the industrial site – industrial site defines what industrial site is. It is a site of industry, yet there are six hours of blackouts every day. Does that mean – I was told already Sanata Mill is spilling its workers. I cannot see any of the firms in the industrial site keeping on the workers to be idle from the lengthy blackouts because industry depends upon electric power, and without power industry cannot run. What is the purpose of all of these things? We are going into a cycle going downwards, downwards, and downwards. The women have no cooking fuel, there is no kerosene, they have to spend long hours in queues, they send their children, take them out of school. Women and children and other members of the family are in fact punishing beyond what is necessary.

I see little children sitting on the curb side dreading to go into that line, people in the broiling sun, just walk a few yards and you will see it. Load shedding has created more problems, more expenses for our people, they have to find candles which are very expensive, and they have to find kerosene for the lamps. They tell us, well, use wood, use coals. Coals are very expensive; they are not cheap nor is wood cheap. In the countryside wood is expensive. Kerosene is really one of the cheapest forms of fuel in spite of

the fact that the price has risen. It is also the cleanest and the easiest to use for the working women. Where is the imagination, where are the innovative qualities, where is the creativeness to find solutions? There is no attempt to find a solution. Why has not one waterfall been harnessed to produce electricity for a country full of waterfalls? Any other country in the world with the waterfalls we have would have harnessed one, but that is that. They threw away Tiger Hill in the 1960s, spent millions and millions - you do not have to tell me how many millions - it is well about eighty on the Upper Mazaruni Project to harness the waterfalls there, but the trouble is it was too large to harness, it costs too much money, it has been abandoned, all the money down the drain, when you think of what has been wasted.

Hasn't anyone started using solar power? You can cook with solar power. Nothing is being done in this country; all they know how to do is to pull up the railways, wreck the buses and make transportation an impossibility, so we have transportation failing us, people are walking on the roads, nothing is wrong with walking a mile, two miles, three but then you have to start walking eight, ten and fifteen miles to school or to work, it is getting ridiculous and that is what is happening now. The whole East Coast, Corentyne, everywhere is just fouled up.

Page 12 of the Budget Address, Mr. Speaker says in such lovely language about the grievous waste of resources pertaining to the waste of human resources. My God, look at the waste of human resources, everyday out there thousands and thousands and thousands of people wasting their time. Some of them are wasting twenty four, thirty six, forty eight hours and you are talking about using human resources, our human resources are treated like rubbish.

People are wasting time in lines. A short line that moves fast requires a little patience. No one minds that, but not what we have here. I sat here yesterday and listened to the Prime Minister as he gave use a solution. He is going to allow the proprietors to choose their own times of opening. Today, the first day after his statement, there was no gasoline in one of the stations on Vlissingen Road at a quarter to eight this morning. It is not a question of the hours and the lines. There is no fuel and the Government that waits for the last minute to solve its problem is as stupid as the housewife who waits until she does not have one spoon of sugar in her house before she looks around to buy. Any housewife with any common sense would know that she has to have a supply ahead of time if she is to run things in a manageable way. This Government cannot manage. It made a mess of management. The Members of the Government talk about human resources. That is sheer hypocrisy. There is no concern for human resources. There is no concern for human beings who have to waste their time, sweat it out and get nowhere. How many people are frustrated in this country? I was talking to someone who moved up to third place in a line which then came to an end and he had waited since 4 o'clock this morning. They talk

about concern about human resources. We do not care about the housewife; we do not care about our children in schools; we do not care about the workers in industry; we do not care about the civil servants. The administration has gone haywire.

On the first page of the Budget Statement – this, I suppose is a figure of which he is proud – the Minister of Finance talks about the infant mortality rate now standing at 40 per thousand. It is down a little from the figure given by UNICEF in 1982 but we are bound to go down because of modern science and the latest advances in medicine throughout the world, the new drugs and so on. But let us compare our infant mortality rate with that of our neighbours. In 1982 infant mortality in Barbados was 25.1 and if we have gone down by four points they, too, have gone down a minimum of four so it must now be about 20 infant deaths per thousand. Cuba is less than that. It is 19.3. As in Barbados, they, too, have had an improvement in drugs and other things. Probably they are now down to 16 or 17 deaths per thousand. In 1982 Dominica was 19.6 when Guyana was 44, but we are 40 today. We were the highest in the English-speaking Caribbean. At that time Grenada was 15.4, Jamaica 16.2, Saint Lucia 33.1 and St. Vincent 38. Not one of these was as high as Guyana in 1982 and if Guyana has gone down by four, then they have gone down too, so it means that we still remain with the highest infant mortality rate in the English-speaking Caribbean and yet this is what we are boasting about.

On this side of the Assembly we do not want to see that, a high infant mortality rate. But there are reasons for it. In the Budget Statement we read about the work being done about milk production and about development of the dairy industry and that the sum of \$10 million is no longer needed for the importation of milk. If there are any mothers here they will know that it is very hard to give your children a pint of milk a day, which is barest minimum every child should receive. Milk is expensive. We buy watered milk at approximately \$2.25 a pint. Tell me how many working class families can afford to give every child a pint of milk a day. Mothers who for one reason or another cannot nurse their infants find it almost impossible to obtain the imported powdered baby milk. There are chits for one or two mothers in the clinics, but the chits are not enough to satisfy the infant population in Guyana and that may account for the fact that our infant mortality rate is high. Children are suffering from malnutrition; they are suffering very definitely from a deficiency in the consumption of milk. I think it would have been better sense for the Minister of Finance to spend that \$10 million, which he boasted he was saving for the country, to bring in the powdered milk which is needed to supplement the locally produced milk.

Our expenditure on security went up and our expenditure on health down. I refer in both instances to the current estimates. The estimates for health this year are \$8.9 million less than the sum estimated last year and the amount for security in the current estimates has gone up by \$27.4 million. Rather than spending more money on security, I would have pre-

ferred to see \$10 million spent to bring in the milk which our children need. I would like to see each child receiving one pint of milk a day. I am not speaking on agriculture but I know enough about the failure in agriculture to know that all this talk about improving dairy farming and increasing production of milk is so much rot. How much money did the Government spend on Moblissa when it wrecked all the dairy farming on the East Coast? How much money was spent on Moblissa when it was erected? Bel Air used to be a large dairy producing area. The Government urged all its farmers to go to Moblissa. What happened at Moblissa? At some time the Members of the Government should tell us. There should be accountability in this Assembly, accountability for the millions – or is it billions? – wasted. I know that when the Peoples Progressive Party was removed for office in 1964 the P.N.C. slogan was “*Free Cassava and Milk*” because so much milk was available. There is no milk available now. The Milk Pasteurisation Plant is doing what any fool could do. They mix powered milk with water and oil. You do not need a pasteurisation plant for that. A pasteurisation plant is to pasteurise fresh milk and remove the bacteria. So, there is a lost or wastage.

The Minister of Finance talked about production. The P.N.C. has been unable to stimulate the workers of this country into any reasonable form of productivity. It has nothing to do with workers not being able to do the work or being lazy. It is because they are not inspired because of the type of Government we have and they way the Government gets into office.

Look at the position of Cuba. I attended the Communist Party Congress in Cuba a few weeks ago. The Minister of Health also attended. In his Report, Fidel Castro showed that the annual rate of productivity has increased each year by 5.2 percent and that, in itself, accounts for a 74 percent increase in production. We cannot increase production. Every time one looks at the figures for production in rice, sugar, bauxite, they are down. Productivity cannot rise. There is no inspiration. The workers are not involved. There is no such thing as workers’ control or genuine workers’ participation. There is no democracy throughout the country, from one end to the other.

In the field of health, we hear glowing terms about this and that and we hear all the great things the Government is doing. No one can have an operation at the Public Hospital, Georgetown. There is no anaesthesia. People requiring surgery are “*bounced off*”. One finds that the Medical Centres do not have the most basic things. A comrade of mine was in an accident near the Forty Wellington Hospital. The medical personnel were there but there was nothing for them to work with. They could not bind up his bleeding and when we finally reached the Georgetown Hospital late in the evening, there was no solution to wash the injured parts of his body.

My colleagues had to run from drug store to drug store in Georgetown until they finally were able to buy some hydrogen peroxide. A big Public Hospital does not have the solution to clean the wounds. I do not care

what the Minister is going to say but the fact is this: In Medical Centres in all parts of the country there are no drugs, no cotton wool, no gauze, there is nothing. The poor Medical Personnel have nothing. At the Saint Francis Mission, for example, they have two nurses but the nurses there have nothing to work with. They do not have medicine, they do not have any lights, they do not have any equipment. They have nothing. In a Macusi village they put up a medical centre three years ago. The lizards are living there now. There is nothing for them. It is pitiful all this is wasted. Our country, instead of progressing is going backward. We never used to have typhoid, now everyone you look at has typhoid. Typhoid is spreading all over the place.

[Laughter]

Mrs. Jagan: Yes. It is not a joke. I know my that three of personal acquaintances have had typhoid in the last few weeks. That is in the city, and in the country it is increasing as well. Malaria is also increasing. We hardly ever had typhoid. Now typhoid is prevalent. One reason is, our pure water supply is very bad. The bacteria count is so high that the water is causing typhoid. As we know on the East Bank last year, there was a typhoid outbreak. It seems to be prevalent right through the country and right in our city of Georgetown there are many cases. So we find that there is no equipment in the Health Centre. There are not sufficient drugs and when we try to discuss this thing in this Assembly, Cde. Chairman, no one is interested.

Yesterday I received a Notice Paper of three Motions in my name. One of them discusses the need for adequate medical personnel in all the rural interior districts and all Health Centres to be staffed and provided with sufficient drugs and medical supplies. I did not put that Motion yesterday. I put that Motion on May 23 last year and they never dealt with it. They do not deal with motions here. I have another one –

[**The Speaker:** Just a minute, Cde. Jagan, what do you mean by saying that you put that Motion last year May?]

Mrs. Jagan: In the previous Parliament

[**The Speaker:** Well we are not dealing with the previous Parliament, we are dealing with this one. You put it in very recently and it is on the Notice Paper.]

Mrs. Jagan: In 1985 I was a Member of this Parliament in which I put the same Motions, and they were not dealt with in that Parliament and that is the sickness that we on this side of the Assembly have been enduring for a long time as you know.

[**The Speaker:** The impression that you are giving is that those Motions have been put so long ago and they were not dealt with.]

Mrs. Jagan: No, I am sorry I did not mean that. I meant they were retabled. I retabled them because they were not dealt with last year and I have been doing that year after year. I am not the only person who has been doing that; year after year we keep retabling the Motions and they are not dealt with.

There is another one, a very important one, that was laid on May 23, 1985-

“Whereas there are insufficient supplies of milk either locally produced or imported to meet the needs of the child population and adult population and we are calling on the Government to see that adequate supplies of milk are imported and equitably distributed to supplement this country.”

So those are important things but this Assembly does not seem to want to discuss them. Let us hope that this time they will be discussed, but my experience is that they have to be retabled from session to session. To my recollection only one of my Motions in the last few years was discussed dealing with the need for minimum wages for domestic workers. As far as I recollect this Assembly agreed to it but there is also the question of implementation. It has never been implemented. There are not minimum wages for domestic workers and they still remain one of the most exploited sections of women workers, and I am not a very intelligent person but I am not without my education. I have had a little bit and I cannot understand what is meant by this:

“Our economic cloud has a silver lining. The difficult circumstances can be overcome with a resolute commitment to conservation and innovative entrepreneurship.”

That is a quotation at the end of the Budget Speech. What the blazes does that mean. Is this what we are going to build our future on? Conservation and innovative entrepreneurship.? That is ridiculous for any intelligent person to expect that this will take us out of the economic crisis that Guyana has fallen into and the terrible decline in the normal level of the people in the socio-conditions in the political climate, and in the economic conditions. This is going to pull us out? This again is just a rolling of words around the tongue without meaning. We hear many beautiful addresses, addresses from the other side of the Assembly. They are very classy speakers, beautiful language, but they are tongue twisters. They are meaningless because when we come down to what the people of Guyana needs, they need work, more employment, enough fuel to take them through the transport problems, to be able to cook, they need decent medical attention.

It is no use to say in the Constitution that all people have the right to work; it sounds so nice but where is the work? Where are the jobs? Everyone has the right to free medical care but what kind of care? What kind of medical care with the chief drug given in many of our rural and distant clinics being the aspirin. Aspirin has become the cure or end of all diseases. People have to go out and buy their medicine from the drug store. I know that people had to pay as much as \$6 per capsule. I am worried when poor people have to pay for their medicine. I do not care what the rich people pay. Poor people have to run out in so many areas, they have to bring in food because the food in the hospital is so difficult for sick people to swallow. These are actualities. These are the realities. These are the things the Guyanese people want. They want work, they want freedom, they want democracy, they want to be able to go to the elections and chose a Government they want. All of these things people want and what are they getting? They are getting talks about innovative entrepreneurship. That is all I have to say.

[Applause]

Motion of Sympathy on the Death of Swedish Prime Minister: 17th March, 1986

[**Mr. Eusi Kwayana:** *“Be it resolved that this National Assembly records its deep grief at the assassination of the late Prime Minister of Sweden, Olaf Palme, and hails him as a tried and tested soldier of peace, a democratic statesman, friend of the oppressed and campaigner in Europe in defence of the interests of developing countries:*

Be it resolved further resolved that this Assembly expresses its deep appreciation at the promise of the new Prime Minister of Sweden to continue the policies of his predecessor in relation to the developing countries:

And be it further resolved that this Assembly requests that the Honourable Speaker convey these expressions to the Swedish Parliament. “]

Mrs. Jagan: Cde. Speaker, I rise to second this Motion and to state that the P.P.P. feels very strongly about the brutal murder of the Prime Minister of Sweden. He was a man of peace and his nation has always been at the forefront of peace. Shortly before his unfortunate death he was involved in a petition by five nations, I think including the Prime Minister of India, on the question of nuclear armament growth. He and the others who joined in the five-nation protest were seeking the elimination of nuclear armament and of course the possibility of nuclear war. I should like to join the Mover and ask that this Assembly expresses its sympathy on the death of the last Prime Minister of Sweden and offers condolences to the people of Sweden and to the widow and family of the deceased.

[**The Speaker:** Do I understand that there is an amendment to this Motion? The resolve clause is somewhat different.]

Mrs. Jagan: I think you can leave it as it is. It is just a normal expression.

Motion on the Approval of Financial Paper No. 1 of 1986 in Committee of Supply: 12th June, 1986

Mrs. Jagan: Cde. Chairman, I would like to raise a point on the amount of money under this item 53 - \$653,200 - to meet the increase in salaries and allowances to the Chairman and Vice Chairmen of the Regional Democratic Councils. I want to draw the attention of this Assembly to the fact that we are creating a more burdensome bureaucracy by this so-called regional system and we are not making things any better for the people who live within these regional district. All we are doing is just increasing the bureaucracy. We have problems to be solved. Therefore I would like to draw it to the attention of this assembly.

[**The Chairman:** Are you merely drawing the attention of the Assembly to that?]

Mrs. Jagan: I am also asking that some attention be drawn to the fact that the such expenses should not continue.

[**Cde. Dr. C. Jagan:** I just want to add that not only the bureaucracy is expanding, I want to know when they will properly be elected.]

[**The Chairman:** Capital Estimates, page 1, item 4.]

Mrs. Jagan: Cde. Chairman, Item - Office and Residence of the President: According to my calculations for 1985, we have spent \$1.3 million on repairing the residence which does not seem to be occupied. I pass by almost every day and I cannot see that it is being occupied. I would like to refer at a later stage to another item on the upkeep. But why should it cost \$1.3 million - and I believe it is more than this because this is the only amount for 1985 - when all that was involved was a little flare-up in the attic. We understood that some children were playing with matches. So it was only to repair the result of a minor fire and now it has become a major amount. I do not know that this country, poor as it is, can afford such exorbitant expenditure.

Item 3 which the last speaker already dealt with: I want to find out about this question of a design for the Public Hospital. I think a lot has to be done before one just goes and pays an architect for a design. There are already designs for a public hospital. When I was Minister we had a design and we did not pay an amount like this. This is the first question that has to be dealt with before you start spending \$1½ million to design one: what are the possibilities of building a new hospital, how much would be the anti-

pated cost, is it possible to raise such funds, is it possible to build a hospital there? In fact, I remember when I was Minister of Health the original intention was to build the new hospital on what is now the grounds which the G.D.F. took over; that was considered really the best site, but already G.D.F. took over. I don't really think they know what they are doing but to rush in and spend money on a design before they work all the aspects of building a new hospital. I think this is just another waste of money. I would like to ask the Minister, who are the architects involved and when was the commission given to design a hospital? How much money can the Government raise for the building of a hospital? I think that is most important before we plunge into other expenses. Does this Government really think that it can build a new public hospital? My personal opinion is, particularly after listening to the misery and weak and sad explanation about the Glass Factory, that it is incompetent and capable of taking on such a task.

Motion on the Approval of Financial Paper No. 2 of 1986 in Committee of Supply: 12th June, 1986

[**The Minister of Finance:** *“Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2/1986 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates for the period ended 1985-12-31.”*]

Mrs. Jagan: Cde. Chairman, I want to speak on item 1 Head 1 – Office of the President. I am speaking about the large amount of expenditure for the repairs to the residence. For 1985 a total of \$508,000, was spent for the upkeep of the residence and Guyana House. I should imagine that when the provision was arranged, when the figures were computed for the 1985 Budget, one would have had a fair idea of what it would cost to upkeep the residence. Instead, we have two supplementary amounts, far more than the original amount provided. I would like to know why it is costing more to upkeep the residence and, particularly, in view of the fact that it was unoccupied during the latter part of 1985.

I would like to speak on Items 12 and 15. On this item there is almost \$1,000,000 to meet electricity arrears and this was for last year. I would say as others have said that the Government is delinquent. They should pay their electricity charges. When the small man does not pay his electricity it is cut off and he pays a lot of money to restore it yet this Government is allowed to get away with \$1,000,000. They should look at this and stop putting pressure on the small man.

Item 15, says \$1.4 million to meet the cost of medical supplies for districts. If the Government was programming its needs properly it seems that we would not be in the ridiculous and embarrassing and distressing situation where our doctors and nurses do not even have the most elementary things with which to do their vital work. I have certain absolute information that doctors do not even have sterile gloves when they have to assist internally in delivering babies. There was a recent case because there were no gloves available for the doctor in helping a delivery, the mother had severe infection as was bound to happen. In the same case there was excessive bleeding and there was not even cotton wool available for the doctor to attempt to stop the bleeding and the money was available, because there they said we have already spent \$1.4 million to buy the necessary drugs and necessary supplies. What is the problem? It has to be very poor management because it does not seem to be lack of money.

Cde. Speaker, what I am speaking about applies to the most elementary drugs, elementary supplies and equipment which are needed to keep our medical institutions going. If it is not money, then I say that the Health Ministry must pull up its socks and get down to the task of programming

its imports of the things needed so that our patients in the hospital will get proper care and would not have to suffer indignity. I say that the Ministry of Health is not doing its business and it is time it got down to the task of having an efficiently run Health Service.

Motion on the Pure Water Supply Problems: 25th June, 1986

Mrs. Jagan: *"Be it resolved that the National Assembly urges the Government to solve the many pure water supply problems existing throughout the country and resolve to provide every community with a functioning potable water system. "*

Cde. Speaker, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name which says: *"Be it resolved that the National Assembly urges the government to solve the many pure water supply problems existing throughout the country and resolve to provide every community with a functioning potable water system."* This question of pure water supply for the whole of Guyana is perhaps one of the most important questions that face the majority of Guyanese. After all, water is one of the very basics of life. We cannot live without water and on the other hand we can get sick and die if our water supply is inadequate or if it is contaminated. In the last few years we have had an upsurge of typhoid in particular, and other gastro-intestinal problems, many of which had arisen out of impure water supply systems. I stress that water is basic to life and, therefore, should engage the attention of this House to try to see that the conditions are improved. I am very happy, Mr. Speaker, that this matter has finally reached this House.

In the last Parliament the exact Motion was placed more than a year ago, on May 23, 1985 and was published as number 89. Only one or two Motions were dealt with in that last Parliament. We did not have the Wednesday sittings which I do hope will continue after the events of early next month.

I want to point out that the problems of water extend far and wide and right here in the capital of Georgetown, city of Guyana. In the Kiltern Evershon Bright area there are no wells. There have been repeated representations for the people to get a pure water supply system and they have even reached a stage where they have to use go-carts or push-carts to fetch water from one and a half mile away. There is no point fetching water at a distance of one and a half miles. I can give you examples of people having to fetch water longer distances. In the 55, 56 and 60 areas of Corentyne they have not had stand pipes for years. They have a very acute water shortage. In the Gangaram area in Berbice for years there has been no pure water supply. People have to depend on rain or creek water or they have to purchase water at \$10 a drum which is no easy matter for people of the lower income group who are really seeing rough conditions.

Another thing is that many of these people pay rates and get nothing in return. In River Town on the Essequibo Coast they drilled a well but they did not complete it. So the people had to dig sand holes for water. Again, they are drinking impure water. At Bounty Hall on the Essequibo, five

years ago they dug a well and they constructed a building but they did not install a pump. It was supposed to replace a pumping station to take off the heavy pressure and demands from the Dartmouth Supply Centre which, incidentally, goes off and on depending on the very poor, irregular and unsubstantial electricity supplies. In many of our areas the poor water supply also relate to the poor electricity supplies because the pumping depends upon the electricity.

At the Anna Regina Multilateral School, for seven years there has been no pure water supply and the children there have no pure water for drinking and there is no water for the flushing of the toilets. So the children there have to exist under these most unsatisfactory and unsanitary conditions.

At Charity, a filter is needed for the pumping station. Red water goes through and this in turn affects the linens and equipment at the Charity Hospital. Obviously they need a de-colouring agent. The Regional Democratic Councillors on the Essequibo raised a problem of the water shortage at Johanna Cecilia. They asked also for a water tender to supply water. In other words, as I go through this partial list of the numerous pure water supply problems which the Government has been unable to tackle, they are unable to provide any form of relief, not even bringing water in drums and distributing it to the people. At Ogle, on East Coast, in the dry season there is no water at all. The source is Better Hope and that again depends on the pumps. People are forced to find other means of getting water and this is how we have so many broken pipes. It is agreed that breaking of the pipes is wrong, people should not do it, but out of necessity people frequently do things to survive. People break pipes where they cannot get water because they need water. They should not be in a position where they are forced to break the law and the pipes.

A petition was sent to the Regional Development Council and to the Minister on this subject one year ago and at Mon Repos on the East Coast it is the same, no water, in Western Berbice people have to pull their water carts at least two miles into the settlement of Bath Estate. Across the river, at Pouderoyen, inside the half mile where a lot of people who live there have to fetch water. The new well that was dug on the Public Road is not working, which is typical. . . there are so many cases where there is work done on well - either it is not finished or not done properly. I have a report at Pouderoyen of 12 typhoid cases.

At Vreed-en-Hoop people have to fetch water. Vreed-en-Hoop is a semi-urban area, people have to fetch water at half a mile, from one section to another. Here again you have people breaking pipes. Mr. Speaker, I think you know that when they break pipes for water to come out then they dig holes under where the pipes are broken and put their buckets there and the water is terribly contaminated. This is the cause of a lot of diseases going around.

At Hague on the West Coast of Demerara there is no water; it has to be brought in the tractor and trailer which is expensive. Otherwise people have to use trench water. In fact, trench water and river water are used with great frequency in rural areas where people cannot get a pure water supply. At Ruimzigt, on the West Coast, people complain bitterly that they are paying water rates but they get no water. The source is Windsor Forest but Windsor Forest does not have the pressure to provide the water as far as Ruimzigt.

At Eversley on the West Coast they never had a pure water supply and from Mora which is beyond Bubu, going on to the East Bank Essequibo they never had any pure water supply. 99.9 percent of the areas I have named so far are the areas that this country depends upon for its food supply. These are the areas this country depends upon for a great deal of its export market for rice and other products and yet these areas get very little in return. All we hear about is grow more food, go to the land. They provide the wealth of this country and they get nothing in return. It is wrong. They are citizens, they pay heavy taxes and indirect forms of taxation, as well as heavy taxes for rates and taxes in their villages. They get practically nothing in return and yet we hear grow more food. If we want people to grow more food we have to give them some of the amenities of life and Pure Water Supply Department should be doing its business and not sleeping all the time.

In Canal No. 1, a four-mile distance is without water. The Canal is one of the greatest producers of the food that the people of Georgetown eat and yet they get nothing in return. Right here in the city of Georgetown we have a disgusting water supply. We get worms in the water; we have impure water. Excuse me, Cde. Speaker, I want to present some samples of water. I hope Comrades can see this. This is approximately a half inch sediment from the Georgetown Water Supply taps. This is from Thursday, June 19. We are drinking this filth. This is what is making us sick. This is the same sediment, when you turn the bottle upside down on June 19. It looks like mauby. I brought this to demonstrate that in the capital city of Georgetown to which Heads of Government of the Caribbean will be coming on Tuesday, we have to drink this muck and I can bet my last dollar that the hotels in Georgetown do not boil their drinking water. I do not know how many houses boil drinking water. They should, honestly, because the water is impure in the capital city of this nation and it is a crime that we should have water like this for our people to drink and having to tell them to boil water. It is fine for the rich man, he has a gas stove, but what about the small man? Every time I pass the gasoline station I see them standing in lines for kerosene. Where are the people going to get the fuel to boil all the water they drink? It is easy to say boil water but it is not easy for the poor man because he has enough trouble getting cheap fuel for cooking in his home. It is hard to get. Every day I see long lines of housewives in particular waiting for kerosene. A lot of people have to take their children out of

school to stand in lines. The situation is very bad.

I always enjoy listening to the Members of the Government laugh at the problems of the people and I can tell them, I have informed the public of how you giggle and laugh when we talk about the problems facing the poor people. It is funny to you but it is not very funny to those who suffer from it and I would report how you laugh when I said that the water supply is bad, I would record it at my public meetings because people like to know how you behave, you people who have usurped power. You don't care a hang about the poor man, how the poor man suffers. Surely we hear how the small man will become a real man but he cannot become a real man if he cannot even have proper water supplies, cannot even provide pure drinking water for the people of the country after twenty-one years. It is criminal, it is a shame and I would urge that this House treat a matter of this importance with some seriousness and stop their giggling and laughing when we point out the problems that the ordinary man suffers. The ordinary man is suffering, so these are the reasons Cde. Speaker, why I have brought and why my Party has brought this Motion to this House, battling a long time for it to be heard, a very long time, I waited a long time for many Motions to come before this House but at long last at least we have some ventilation of the people's problems and I would urge this House to support the Motion in the interest of the people of Guyana and in the interest of the health of the people of this country.

Mrs. Jagan: (Replying) Cde. Speaker, the Minister responsible for water supplies has implied giving us a very long list of things that will be done yet what I notice was that he had a propensity for using the future tense – and everything is going to come. I have been in this Assembly for a long time, probably longer than that Member and I have sat here and I listened to any number of promises but when the time comes promises are never fulfilled. According to this everything is going to be fine in a few months or even in a few years. When we had the Motion and the last Member spoke about communication problems ...

[**The Speaker:** Cde. Jagan, if you look at your own Motion, forgetting the Amendment, you are asking that steps the Government will take to solve the problem, and they are telling you what they are proposing to do.]

Mrs. Jagan: I am making the point that promises are one thing but fulfilment is something else. The Member spoke about the unjustified fears of the minority about the various problems in the pure water supply system and yet in telling them what he is going to do in the future he pinpointed a large number of the fears I expressed or the problems I expressed. So it means that they are correct and he says that they are going to correct them soon. We can only hope that they will come through because our experience gives us a different lesson. We hope that the promise of bringing spares

for the pumps will fulfil the needs because it is my information that the very poor electricity supply is burning out a lot of the engines and added to that many of them are very old so it means that we must have ample spare parts on hand so that we can keep the pure water supply functioning. I would like to urge that other things, like the shortage of drugs, that there be some administrative technique, administrative commonsense in ordering. After all they have been there for 21 years and to talk about what they are going to do in the future means that they should have done all these things before because people have been punishing for a long time.

[**The Speaker:** If I am to refer to your substantive Motion, it says to solve the water problem. You have recognised that that is a problem and they have recognised that there is a problem and they are taking steps to solve it.]

Mrs. Jagan: I am making the point that I am urging them from the experience we have had, for example, on the question of spare parts, they might not have been ordering ample spare parts, they might not be tackling the problems as they exist. I agree with him when he said that they cannot see pure water supply in isolation.

And he made the point that we have to look at it also in relation to electricity supplies which are very bad and, in spite of the fact that fuel came into the country recently, I find the electricity supplies are almost as bad as they were when we had a fuel shortage. I experienced yesterday at my home two lengthy blackouts. So you can imagine what damage that has done to the various engines. Also, the Minister spoke about one of the constraints was the problem of foreign exchange. It is a problem but I would like to urge that side of the Assembly that they should use what foreign exchange they have very carefully and in the interests of the people. For example, \$4 million of cement and other materials to build the Cuffy Square is unnecessary and yet they are using up a lot of foreign exchange and doing many things that are not relevant.

The Minister did talk about the Georgetown system, that they will be drilling seven new wells and they will be getting generator sets, etc. I would like to urge that instead of subjecting Georgetown to this, that they try in the meantime before the wells are dug and before the rehabilitation takes place, to bring in the chemicals required to give us a clear water supply. My information is that Georgetown water supply requires approximately 500 tons of powder hydrated lime and only about 40 tons are arriving. I am suggesting that in the meantime before they get down to all the wells and rehabilitation and things like that they bring in the chemicals necessary to give us a better water supply so that we do not have to be subjected to this.

I came to Guyana in 1943, I think that is public knowledge. When I came to Guyana we used to bathe in the straight Lamaha water which was exactly this colour. So in the 40 odd years we do not seem to have made much

progress. We moved during the period I have seen with my eyes from the straight supply of Lamaha water which used to be dirty and rusty to getting a pure water supply and now we are right back to the starting point with the water supply being bad. The seconder of this Motion made a very important point, that the pressure is so very bad that only people who use water on the bottom flat are getting water. That is why the seconder of the Motion could not get water on the second floor. It is virtually impossible. So all those who have the misfortune to live on the second floor flats...

[Interruption]

[The Speaker: Cde. Belgrave, it is your Member who is speaking.]

Mrs. Jagan: The water should be pumped in about 50 pounds per square inch but instead the pumping is only about 10 pounds per square inch. And as we are talking about a pure water supply – I hope you would not consider it irrelevant – but you also have to keep in mind that you must take the pressure for the fire department and we have seen many examples of what has happened without the pumping pressure. I only add that to show that the pressure does not only affect water supply into the houses. It affects also the protection of our homes from fire. So that these are important aspects and I would urge that we have ample supplies of pumps and spare parts. I am not sure if GUYWA – from what I have observed in the past – has been ordering things from year to year to keep up with the things, the points I mentioned which he agreed to and agree that they are trying to improve. I know that if they were dealing with it from year to year in an efficient fashion we probably would not be in the miserable situation we are in now. I would like to urge the Member responsible for pure water – in the sugar estates the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund was taking care of the whole housing arrangements, including pure water and housing areas were getting far better water supplies than they do today. Now the people live in the sugar estates housing areas have to pay rates and are getting much reduced water supplies.

I must say I was very, very happy to hear the Minister say that the improvement of Timehri will be completed soon. I hope he lives up to his promises because I am constantly shocked at the fact that an international airport is so poorly off when it comes to water facilities. I do not know what passengers think when they go to our airports. They must be thinking that we are primitive because the toilets cannot be flushed and there is no water available whatsoever.

I would like to inform the other side of the Assembly that it would not be possible to accept the Amendments proposed by the Government to say that we approve of the steps being taken by the Government to solve pure water supply problems as exist in the country. I cannot in all consciousness give approval because I do not think that sufficient steps have been taken to

solve the pure water supply problems. If they had taken sufficient steps I would not be standing on my feet now. I can only believe the promises when I see them. I can only hope that they will happen. Therefore, I cannot say that we approve of the steps; they have not taken sufficient steps. If they had there would not be tens of thousands of people in Guyana from the hinterland to the rural areas to the city of Georgetown who are punishing everyday because of the atrocious water supply system.

Motion on the Importation of Milk: 25th June, 1986

Mrs. Jagan: *“Be it resolved that the National Assembly call on the Government to see that adequate supplies of milk are imported and equitably distributed in order to supplement the present inadequate supplies of locally produced milk.”*

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion in my name which states *“Whereas there are insufficient supplies of milk, either locally produced or imported, to meet the needs of the child population, as well as the needs of adults; and whereas milk cannot be eliminated from the diet of our children; be it resolved that the National Assembly calls on the Government to see that adequate supplies of milk are imported and equitably distributed in order to supplement the present inadequate supplies of locally produced milk”*.

The P.N.C. has told us that there will be sufficiency in milk by 1988, if their projection is true and we would hope so but one must have doubts after what has happened to the dairy industry which I might discuss later. What happens in the meantime, how are people to get adequate milk if the Government itself admits that in two years time they hope to be self-sufficient, but what about now, what about this year, next year and the year after. They are forcing people to go on to the black market, that is the crime, people are forced onto the black market. There is a conspiracy then to force people to go to the parallel market. Today a five pound tin of powdered milk which I could buy for thirty two dollars now sells on the black market for approximately \$170.00 to \$195.00. That is a lot of money but they have to spend their money because they need it. Lactogen, which is used for infants and children, a two and a half pound tin is one hundred and thirty dollars on the black market but you can get the same two and a half pound tin in Barbados for fourteen Barbadian dollars. It is not fair that the Guyanese people have to pay so much for milk; even fresh milk produced locally is sold at \$2.25 and \$2.50 a pint. The minimal wage in Guyana is \$16.00 a day and yet one pint of milk which would really only truly take care of one child's need is as high as \$2.50 a day. The Lidco milk is selling for \$2.10 and \$2.25 a pint so there is not a great deal of difference between the two. At one time the Infant and Maternity Welfare Clinics are assisting in the pre-natal and post natal clinics; they are assisting mothers with children, whereby they can get powdered milk at the correct price, they were given chits and with that they would get at the non-black market price; but chits are no longer given and, to my knowledge, they have not been producing chits to mothers - I think for over a year or only occasionally- and what they are telling the mothers is, and this is also a sad reflection on what is happening in Guyana is that the milk at the controlled price is only for third grade malnutrition cases. Not even grade one malnutrition cases are

allowed to get milk, only grade three; this is pretty bad because what are you doing, you are forcing mothers that live on a low income or even less than low income ... because there are lots of people in this country who are unemployed, whose husbands are unemployed, there are many single parent families where the woman has to raise the child all on her own and where it is very hard to get a job.

It is true that everyone encourages mothers to breast-feed, which is the best and we support that completely; but you have to remember that they are a lot of women who are unable to breast-feed their children and when they are unable to breast-feed the infants, they must have another source of milk for the child and this is what is leading to great malnutrition in the country. Guyana never had so much malnutrition, it is no use that the Government gives us it nonsensical replies about malnutrition, saying that it is not really malnutrition, that even rich children can be malnourished, which is true but it is very rare where a rich child in malnourished.

Malnutrition exist mainly amongst the poor people, the poverty stricken people. A man who earns the minimum wage of sixteen dollars pay a day cannot provide all his children with milk, yet any doctor, or let us put it this way: any genuine, honest doctor will tell you that every child should have a pint of mild a day and I challenge any honest doctor to tell us otherwise. There are doctors who would trim their sales to suit what is happening but the fact is that milk is a whole food and children must have milk if they are to grow and survive, if their bones are to develop, their teeth, if they are to become healthy and strong and vibrant children they must have milk. The lower income and unemployed group in Guyana has no access to milk. We have urged over and over again that the school feeding programme be returned and were told that we have a school feeding programme every year. It just is not true. Occasionally they might have functioned but the fact of the matter is that you do not have a regular supply of milk on a daily basis for children. We do know that many children are going to school without having had much of a breakfast. Some of them cannot even carry food to school for midday meal and when they go home at nights they get just what the family can afford and it would not be much in the line of protein. We have to remember that the milk requirements of the nation are not being met by the dairy industry plus the milk pasteurisation plant which we see has powdered milk mixed with butter fat and with water and sold as milk. The two together do not provide sufficient milk for the Guyanese community. Therefore, until the Government is able to produce a vibrant dairy industry, it must bring into the country the required amount of powdered milk that the nation needs. We are not against the building of the dairy industry. We remember in the 1964 elections there was a very famous slogan where the P.N.C. said there would be free milk and cassava for everyone because the P.P.P. was able to increase the production of milk considerably so that there was a large amount of milk available. But in the meantime the dairy industry has taken a fall and that has to do with the policies

of the P.N.C. They must know where they failed. We know they failed.

Look at little Barbados. Barbados has achieved self-sufficiency in milk in five years. They now produce a surplus of 10,000 gallons a week. This was said by the Chairman of the Guyana Liquor Corporation Yesu Persaud on December 29, 1984. I may mention that Barbados has used methods of making itself sufficient in milk by methods discarded by Guyana. He said the sugar estates kept cattle and fed them on cane tops and molasses and that gave a high production of milk. Yesu Persaud recommended that but instead what do we find? Only two or three weeks ago we approved of a sum of 1½ million dollars in consultation fees for a dairy industries project. I support what Yesu Persaud said. If you use the older method with sugar there will be a lot of milk there. My experience is that they should give farmers a chance. Do not exploit them. Give them a change and they will produce milk. Milk can be produced in Guyana but the Government has been unable to marshal the transportation and use of milk. They are a grossly incompetent. Milk is being produced. The small man can produce milk. Right now I live in Bel Air and there is a lot of milk there but instead of encouraging the people the Mayor is telling them to get rid of their cows. We have the potential for a dairy industry but the Government is incompetent and incapable of dealing with this.

Our experience in the 1960s was that we had built a sound dairy industry by encouraging the producers; so that we had milk there. The next stage we were moving to which I did mention to Members of the other side of the Assembly was the milk must be converted in one form or another, either powdered or evaporated because there are sections of Guyana where fresh milk cannot reach and therefore the powdered milk is important. It is also important in a country where people were poor and do not have the services or benefit of a refrigerator. That is one advantage particularly when dealing with the influence of having powdered milk because it can be made at the time. This resolution then states that there are insufficient supplies until we have built our own self-sufficiency. I may mention, Mr. Speaker that this very Motion I table was published last year, fourteen months ago, as Motion No. 88 and like the previous Motion is only now seeing the light of day. I am glad that it is finally seeing the light of day because I think milk is a very very important part of our lives and I would like to see sufficient milk available at prices for the poor man so that the poor father and mother can provide every single child with a pint of milk per day. I would like to urge that that be the target for every Guyanese child.

I would like to point to one of our neighbouring Caribbean territories. I would like to point to Cuba which has made it. One of the earliest things the Cuban Revolution produced for its people was milk. All the children are getting milk. They have carefully administered and fairly equitably administered system wherein all families get their quota of milk at a very, very reasonable price, quite within the means of the working man and woman. I would like to urge that this be our aim. I was told that up to 1981

66 percent of milk required had to be made by imported milk. Only 25 percent of the milk was from local production. I am not sure what the exact figures are today. Maybe the Minister can update us. I do not know we do not have sufficient milk to meet the needs of the people. We strive for self-sufficiency in milk. We strive for production wherein milk is sold at a reasonable price and if a reasonable price is impossible then the Government must do what it did before and subsidise milk because it is important for the health of the nation and again we will probably be told that one of the constraints is the question of foreign exchange. But then we must broom out from our expenditure unnecessary expenditure and keep it to the things that we need. Certainly we have to import milk and we have to see that the sale on the black market is stopped because it is criminal for poor people to spend thousands of dollars for milk. We can see that it is controlled and that the milk that is brought into the country is not moved out to black marketers because I may mention that there are a number of things produced in Guyana that you cannot see. Soap is produced in Guyana yet you do not see it in the stores. It goes right to the black marketers and so there is a new system. I do not know exactly how it is done but apparently it is the duty of the Government to protect the consumers and to see that they do not have to pay black market prices. Therefore, I urge that when and if and I hope it will be soon, that milk is brought into the country to meet the needs of the Guyanese people, that it will be distributed equitably and that the price will be kept at a reasonable point.

Mrs. Jagan: (Replying) Cde. Speaker, the Minister in replying to this Motion made a statement that I cannot accept and I think it is entirely wrong. He says that milk is not an absolute necessity. I think he is entirely wrong. I think it is a generally accepted view by doctors and nutritionists that milk is essential to the diet. Even more so in a country like Guyana where other foods that might be able to supplement the diet are in short supply and so expensive and difficult for the poor man to obtain that it is total unacceptable to make statements like that. Eggs are \$1.00 each and provide quite a lot of protein. I was in the stores today. We were talking about the debate last week about split peas. Blackeye peas were \$8.50 today and this is impossible for the lower income people to buy. Chicken is \$16 per pound. Not so long ago we used to buy chicken for \$3.50 a pound but the inflation has so affected our essential foods that they are quite beyond the pocket book of the small man and that is why I have brought this Motion for over a year. I say that milk is such an essential that I say that the Minister is ill-advised or he is totally insensitive to say that it is not an absolute necessity. He goes on by saying something that really caused me to wonder. He says the Government has ensured a certain level of importation of milk which is provided to hospitals and clinics and is provided to expectant mothers and lactating mothers. I say that is a lie. It does not exist in Guyana and if the giggling Ministers over there would control themselves I would say if milk

comes in it is not equitable distributed because the ordinary woman is not getting any milk. I say that categorically if the Minister would go back to answer, I would ask where and when is milk distributed? I spoke about equitable distribution. Maybe there is some distribution but it is being distributed on a discriminatory basis. I do know that hundreds of women attend clinics and I have found that chits are only being given for babies who have third degree malnourishment and I would say that the Minister is not properly informing this Assembly. He speaks about foreign exchange being scarce and thus milk cannot be imported. But I say it is the duty of the Government to see that foreign exchange, and I would strongly advise the Minister and his Government to take a sensible approach to the use of foreign exchange and I would give him a few example of improper, adverse and foolish use of foreign exchange which could be used to meet the needs of the people.

I would say that they should cut down on the expensive trips they make and the chartering of aeroplanes and the expenses of embassies abroad. Sometimes I am ashamed when I hear other embassies speak about the ostentatious manner in which our embassies are run. Larger countries than ours have smaller embassies. They do not waste foreign exchange. Ours is called a champagne approach, but poorer countries with greater dignity can carry out their functions without a Mercedes Benz approach. I would remind this Government about tens of millions of dollars they have thrown literally down the drain. How much milk could you have gotten in exchange for the money wasted on the Mazaruni project for 10 solid years? How much money you spent on the road to Brazil which is now overgrown with bush? How much money have you spent on the Mahaicony River with the huge farm machinery rotting away.? The President's College which they are talking about — all this is wasting and the people are starving. Why must the Ministers ride Cadillac-style and the people are starving? What about all the wastage in the Ministry of National Development? Eat your own words. Use a sensible approach to the use of foreign exchange and then you would have the money to bring in ample supplies of parts for our water supplies, milk to keep our children nourished; these are important things.

We hear, again I am saying I am getting accustomed to hearing only the future term, five million gallons of milk will be coming from abroad. I hope it is true. I will be here in this Assembly to ask where is the milk? I will remind you because every Motion we have raised the Minister says we are dwelling in the past. We are dwelling in the present. We are dealing with the problems that face ordinary workers, the unemployed, the housewife, the mothers who are a single parent and all the problems that people face.

And we are dealing with what exists, not the future, not the past. I would urge that the Minister eat some of his words and that he produces the 5 million gallons of milk this year because I will be there on stream to remind

him. We hope when milk comes there will be equitable distribution as this Motion calls for. I would urge that all the Members of this Assembly, recognizing the need of our children, have the decency to support this Motion.

Motion on the Approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for 1987 Budget Debate: 27th January, 1987

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, in examining this Budget I am concerned with what is happening to the quality of life in Guyana. I listened to the Minister of Mobilisation and he spoke about proceeding from the realities of life and I want us to look at the realities of life in this country. He also made a remark that we must not be misled. We must not be misled into believing that this Budget is the same which the Minister said is going to expand our employment opportunities, etc. We have to look at the realities and we must not be misled. The same Minister told us about this Budget improving the conditions of life in Guyana. I have grave doubts about that. In fact, I have to examine what is happening to the standard of living of Guyanese.

Conditions of life have deteriorated. He also said to us that the illness requires some remedy. Since I am on the subject of health, I think it might be good to look at this striking expression that the illness requires some remedy. Any doctor will tell you that the first thing is to diagnose the illness. If you do not diagnose the illness no matter what remedies you give, it will never cure. I know that from my own experience. Just last week, a woman came to me to assist her in her problem. Her problem was that she was very ill.

[Laughter]

Mrs. Jagan: If you listen to me you would not laugh. She was very ill and she came to me for help as do many people who are seeking a cure on how to solve their problems. In her case, she had been to the regional hospital, the Public Hospital in Georgetown, spent one week in a private hospital and she had seen two private doctors. I think that happens frequently with people who are ill and who are looking for a remedy and run to many places and I had guided her in the right direction. It turned out that she was completely and totally mis-diagnosed in all the five places she went and when the right diagnosis was found, she started getting the right treatment. Now this Government does not properly diagnose what is wrong with the economy but they are going ahead with strong remedies which might possibly kill the patient.

Now in looking at the quality of life in Guyana, we have to examine certain norms that may give us an indication of what is happening. For example, the Pan American Health Organisation report on the health conditions of the Americas, in the section Guyana 1981-84, shows that infant mortality rate in 1984 was 45 for 1,000 births. Last year the Budget said that the infant mortality rate was 40 per thousand and then it had fallen in recent years to as low as 35 thousand. But I wonder how true last year's

Budget was because we can only go by accepted international standards. In 1982 as I reported in this House before, the World Population of Children Reference Bureau had shown that Guyana had an infant mortality rate of 44, which was the highest in the Caribbean. The highest, the closest to us was St. Vincent with 38.1. That was in 1982. The PAHO report said that last year it was 45 per thousand and our Budget said it was 40 per thousand. I am not sure what the truth is but the indications are that things have been worsening with our child population. Some time ago, PAHO had noted that Guyana had the largest incidence in childhood malnutrition in the English speaking Caribbean. I think in its most recent report, PAHO reported that nutritional deficiency is the fore leading cause of death among children in Guyana. It ceases to be a guarantee. The environment remains the same with impure water supplies. Government has removed subsidies, increased taxation and removed price control. It gives an incentive to black-marketing and when these prices go up poverty increases.

A pure water supply, in my Motion last July I sighted all the areas where the water supply was so poor. Oh, they said, everything was going to be fine, everything is going to be OK and they will settle the whole things in two or three months. The fact of the matter is like the wind bags over there we hear a lot of noise but they do not produce results. They talk about the wind bags, they talk about rice and I have not seen the solution to the water problem. It is not being solved. Take for example on the Essequibo Coast, Zorg, Weatherton Hall; one of the gentlemen sitting over there should know that at Coffee Grove they have not had any water for five months. There are some other places and that have not had water for one or two months. How do you think typhoid increases? You do not even have the means required for testing for typhoid. You cannot even test the typhoid, you do not even have the laboratory facilities; it is in a mess and there are so many incidents of bad water supplies where the water is impure that you are bound to have diseases. And there are not only typhoid, gastroenteritis and so on.

We talk in this Budget about improving the quality of life, to improve conditions of life in Guyana; we had a Motion just a few days ago about improving the life for our aging Guyanese citizens. After that debate the Minister rejected our proposals to bring a little help to the aged and pensioners, who range from 76 years to 81 years. They are old men and their pants are narrow. They had poor eyesights; they worked in the sugar estates all their life. They told me they began work at 10 cents a day. And what do they get? They do not qualify for N.I.S. so they get 16 dollars a week from the sugar estate and on that they have to live because the gentlemen and ladies on the other side of the House feel that \$67 a month is sufficient along with a minimum of 15 dollars a week. At least four men are getting \$16 per week, therefore they are not entitled to get an old age pension. Therefore how are they to live? There is no health care, and they are making a lot of hot noise about improving the life of Guyanese but on

this side of the House, here in this Parliament in the colonial times in 1953, and I was one of them, and I am able from then to now to see what is happening to the quality of life in Guyana. Now we are beggars on the road. Now you see people sleeping all over the place and they are talking of quality of life. I was there and I know I had never seen such poverty as I am seeing today and the poverty has been brought to this country by the Government. They have been sitting there for 22 years and they have been unable to diagnose the ills and now 22 years later they are talking strong medicine and bringing the devaluation which has only just started. You are only seeing the tip of what the cost of living will be in another week or two. It will be totally unmanageable.

The Minister spoke yesterday, the Minister of Health, about the W.H.O. objectives of health for all before the year 2000. I say at the rate we are going no way, because the health is tied up not only with services offered by the Government, but with all the other factors of life like the food wants, the environment, the quality of housing, all of these things are involved in the question of health. We heard a big noise when I brought a Motion the other day; now we were bringing in some 300,000 gallons of milk. I ask here where is the milk? Are the children getting the milk? Are the mothers getting the milk? No way. You are not telling the truth. The fact is that our children are not getting the pint of milk a day they need to keep in good health. How are you going to have the children of today, giving you health in the year 2000 at the rate we are going, how are we going to have health for all by the year 2000?

We also need to examine the Medical Service which has gone so bad that it is embarrassing to talk about. Our Public Hospital in Georgetown does not have the basic drugs, it does not have X-ray and it does not have surgical dressing and gloves. In fact it was told that the new Minister of Health was told by one of the doctors that they could not perform an operation because they did not have gloves. They have swept the institution clean and they are now talking about cutting down on personnel. Professional nurses do more work. This is the kind of hospital we have that has gone right down the hill. So I say that one of the essential factors that we have to look at in this Budget is what is it doing to the quality of life and I say that the standard of living which has dropped considerably will unfortunately drop further because of the iniquitous Budget which has added more and more burdens on the backs of the working people of Guyana.

[Applause]

Request for Leave to Move the Adjournment of the Assembly on a Definite Matter of Urgent Public Importance - The Thallium Sulphate Contamination: 4th March, 1987

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, as you know I wrote you a letter yesterday requesting to move for the Adjournment of the National Assembly at today's sitting in order to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance. That is the prevailing great concern about thallium sulphate poisoning which poses a great threat to the nation. We have listened to the Minister.

[**The Speaker:** No, no, at this stage you are merely seeking my leave, which if it is granted, then the Assembly will decide whether it will be debated and then you will make your contribution.]

Mrs. Jagan: I would like to urge that we have the debate on this serious matter which is affecting a great portion of all Guyanese. I believe that the matter must be debated in order to clear the air on a large number of questions which are bothering a great majority of Guyanese. I believe that there has been some grave neglect.

[**The Speaker:** That is for the debate. You have made your point as an important matter and I will now do the necessary. Comrades it is my view that it is a *prima facie* case but it is for the Assembly to decide if it should be debated under Standing Order 11(3). Is it agreed that it should be debated.]

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Motion on the Adjournment on Thallium Sulphate Contamination: 4th March, 1987

Mrs. Jagan: I thank this Assembly for allowing a debate on a subject which I believe concerns everyone here and everyone outside of Assembly. I welcome the statement by the Prime Minister. While he has given us a number of assurances, I do not think that he has gone far enough to examine some of the things that are taking place. I believe that the matter has been allowed to get out of control. I do not agree that the statement made by the Prime Minister that everything is under control and there will be a quickening of the testing process etc. The fact of the matter is that in dealing with the problem of Thallium poisoning the Minister has absolved GuySuCo of responsibility. I do not see how we can absolve GuySuCo of responsibility of bringing into this country a deadly poison when it is common knowledge that the substance has been banned in the USA since 1965.

The World Health Organisation of the United Nations recommended against its use in 1973 and the banning of Thallium Sulphate was instituted in Germany, Denmark and the United Kingdom. However, and I should say knowingly, GuySuCo brought the poison into the country and in bringing the poison into the country they made the fundamental error of not bringing in the antidote. Certainly if you are using any poison in any way one has to assume that even if you think you are exercising control there are all sorts of methods by which poison gets into other hands. I was personally involved in an incident in 1985 where a family mistakenly used Thallium Sulphate thinking it was salt in a cooking a meal. This is another thing, it is a dangerous drug because of the poison and also because it has no smell, no taste and looks like salt, so people are more prone to make an error in using it. In 1985 this family and their visiting friend had Thallium Sulphate poisoning. Three of them died and two of them survived. It was very painful. We tried every way to get the antidote which we thought at that time was a very wrong position because GuySuCo had no antidote. They brought in the poison and if it got into the hands of people it is their responsibility. There was no antidote. It is only recently that we heard they brought in that antidote.

But they are responsible and I cannot agree that we can cover up GuySuCo's responsibility because they brought in the poison and the poison has apparently been misused at several levels.

I spoke to someone who deals with the methods of making the bait used in the sugar industry and when you hear how it is put together you are horrified to think that in this day and age a deadly poison would be handled in that way. They have a container with rice and liquid and pitch in the Thallium and mix it and when they finally get it to the portion they want then they make the little pellets which they claim they put in the bam-

boo. But what happens to the liquid that is left over? Is it poured somewhere? And we all know now that Thallium is almost impossible to be disposed of. What they do with the containers in which they mix it? What happens to the poor individuals there mixing it? Even if they use gloves, no doubt there would be some falling on their clothes or what have you. The fact is that there does not seem to be much protection in that level. But if you carry it now to the fields and the workers in the fields who have to place it, you see that a lot of people are not properly protected.

If GuySuCo is bringing in Thallium for use to kill rats in the fields, at least they should have issued very clear instructions on the its use. They should have had absolute control over it and they should have protected the workers, but if the poison is being dumped in Guyana like the US dump a lot things that are bad/banned in their own country – the people of the United States are not subjected to the use of a lot of products but they are dumped on the Third World countries, and if the Third World countries are stupid enough to take these things they have to bear the responsibilities. But it has been banned in the United States and GuySuCo should have been aware of it. Now we find that a lot of people believe that they have Thallium Sulphate poison. There have been, after much probing – and here at this stage we must give one newspaper credit. The *Catholic Standard* has championed the cause of exposing Thallium Sulphate poisoning and they have explained many of the things. It is only in January that GuySuCo announced it was no longer using it, but by that time apparently the poison had contaminated a large number of objects, I should say foodstuffs. We do not know if it is in the water, the sugar, the milk, we do not know where it is. But the fact is that a lot of people now have Thallium Sulphate poisoning.

The Prime Minister in his statement spoke about the quickening of the testing process. But I think the process has been unquickened. It has been slowed down. Even the machine that is supposed to quantify the amount of Thallium Sulphate, my information is, is not working and I am led to believe that my information is correct. I visited the Centre on Friday; one of the Ministers here will corroborate it because he was there with his family. A lot of people are worried. The persons who went to be tested on Friday were told to return on Tuesday to get the results but on Tuesday there were no results being given. That is a rather long period. What is the person to do if he goes on Friday with his symptoms, and then they wait until Tuesday and don't get it, and then they wait until Wednesday, Thursday or Friday? When does he get the results? We were told that there is a Thallium Treatment Centre which diagnoses and treats patients for Thallium poisoning and related illnesses. But that is not so because how can they treat the disease if they have not diagnosed the disease and you cannot diagnose the disease until you get the results of the tests? So I cannot see what treatment is going on there. All I saw, and it was a correct procedure, I believe, was a three-page questionnaire asking what symptoms peo-

ple were having, what were the food sources and so on. That is all well and good, and then they were given blood tests. But if the results are not given, what next? I do not know whether the treatment process can go on. And there is a large number of people who believe they have Thallium poisoning.

I have been informed also that because the machine which gives the qualification results of the testing is not working, they can only give a positive or negative result and I have been told that more than 19 percent of the tests given give a positive but no one is getting that positive result. Is the Government afraid to tell so many people they have positive results? People are worried. We get shady and confused statements from the Government saying they are testing the flour. But they have not told us, does the flour have it or not? Does the milk have it or not? No one knows what to eat. That is a problem. People say they eat calaloo and they drink fresh milk and they use sugar and they might be increasing the Thallium. A few who have had Prussian Blue say they are taking Prussian Blue but they are also taking in more Thallium Sulphate. So I would say confusion reigns. I would not say the Minister did not try but I do not think he convinced any of us that he has the matter under control.

I want to ask another serious question. We are having a Non-Aligned Conference here next week. Are we going to take the risk on all those delegates from countries all over the world? What if we have 50 Foreign Ministers getting Thallium Sulphate poisoning? How are we going to screen them off from the possibility of getting Thallium Sulphate poisoning? Are you going to import every morsel of their food and everything they drink from outside sources? I am worried because I do not think it is fair for all of these top level people, friends of ours from many countries to come here and possible not be fully protected. I want the Minister to give us a 100 percent assurance that the delegates coming to the Non-Aligned Conference would not be contaminated and would not go away with positive Thallium Sulphate results in their blood. That would be something just as bad as Jonestown for us.

Now we hear that the blood testing at the Public Hospital has stopped and that they are using urine for testing. I do not know enough to know how careful an analysis one could get from the urine test. Maybe it is good and we would like to have that assurance. But I do believe there is another reason for moving from blood tests to urine tests and one of them is that the things used in the testing of Thallium Sulphate may be in low supply and as I mentioned before the machine which qualifies the tests is not working. Further, when I was there they were using disposable syringes. But I have been told that the disposable syringes have been used up; they are not enough.

That is a possibility: it is one we can understand, but it is also one that can be rectified by bringing in sufficient disposable syringes to take care of the population.

We have been told that there have been no fatalities so far, but I am not sure that this is totally true. There have been certain suspected deaths which cannot be known to be positive or negative because of the fact that the laboratories are no longer releasing the results of the tests. This may be because there are too many tests to be done, the chemicals not being available in the regions, or the other factor, the machines not working.

I want to ask the Government to be clearer in the advice it is giving to the public at large, in terms of how to deal with the situation. As I said before, people do not know what they should be eating and they have to be properly advised on what has to be done. I think that this experience has shown us that the matter has got out of control and that there should be a very careful method of analysing all poisons which are being sold, because it is not only Thallium Sulphate which poses a danger but other pesticides and rodenticides which are being used widely and apparently without proper directions. There should be a method of total control over importation and the sale of all pesticides. For every pesticide that is brought into the country and which is poison, there should simultaneously be brought into the country an antidote for that poison. I do not think we should risk what we have risked with Thallium Sulphate poisoning. The antidote must be there and there must be clear directions on the use of all these poisons which are widely used in our country as pesticides and rodenticides.

Although the Minister gives us the impression that the matter is very much under control, I have been told that private hospitals have many cases which they are dealing with at the moment and very recently. I would say that the number of cases goes into the hundreds.

No advice has been given at any level as to what is to be done with pregnant women. Is the fetus in danger? We do not know. No one knows. There must be advice because pregnant women should know what to do. They have to be properly advised and that is why a statement was issued over the weekend suggesting that there be Thallium Sulphate tests in all the Maternity Clinics and in the schools. We have to be very concerned about our children. If there is Thallium Sulphate poisoning generally, no doubt the children will have it. It is understandable that it will hit children harder than it will hit adults.

These are points which we wish to draw to the attention of the Government. We urge the Government to take the matter more seriously. It is true that we have sought help from outside from international agencies. This is very good but the timing of all this is regrettable. Regrettably it has taken a long time for the Government to recognise that there is a danger. The Prime Minister has said it is not of epidemic proportions. I hope not. I would not like to think it is in epidemic proportions but, at the same time we really have no information as to the extent of the Thallium Sulphate poisoning. I again say that we should have positive figures on how many Thallium poisoning cases exist. I shall not accept that it is not prevalent because private hospitals are dealing with them. We cannot say "*it is just a little thing; it is*

worrying, but we have it in hand." I do not think we have it in hand. I agree with the Minister that we should be very careful not to create hysteria. In no way would I want there to be hysteria but there must be a real sense of urgency. The matter must be dealt with in a competent manner, not the casual and harum-scarum manner which leads one to believe there is confusion at the top. I believe it must be dealt with in very efficient and orderly manner and I would urge that those responsible deal with the matter with the urgency it requires.

I would also urge that an investigation be set in action into the importation by GuySuCo and how they handled the whole question. I do not think that GuySuCo can be so easily absolved. I think a full investigation must be set in motion. Therefore, I am happy that we have had the opportunity to open the debate. I believe this is just the beginning of the debate and I expect we will hear more interesting facts.

Question to Ministers - Preservation of Body of Late President of Guyana: 4th March, 1987

Mrs. Jagan: I would like to ask the Minister of Finance the following question:

Question: (i) Will the Minister say what is the cost to send the body of the late President, Mr. L.F.S. Burnham, to and from Moscow, and what will be the total cost of the representative process?

(ii) What will be the cost of building the Mausoleum and estimated annual maintenance costs?

[**The Prime Minister** gave the following reply (as reported in the Minutes):

- (i) The Government and people of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic have been gracious enough to inform the Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana that there will be no charges for transportation and preservation of the body of the late President Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham.
- (ii) In so far as the cost of the Mausoleum is concerned, the present cost is \$2,457,248.77. There is no estimate at this point of time for the annual maintenance but this is expected to be very minimal.]

Questions to Ministers -Question 38 : Inspection of Employers' Registers of Workers: 18th March, 1987

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask Question No. 38, concerning inspection of employers' registers of workers, which is in my name:

Question: (i) Will the Minister say how many inspections have been made by Labour Department Officers of registers, which are required to be kept by employers under the Household Service Workers (Hours of Work) Act 1980 (No. 17)?

(ii) Will the Minister say how many registers, approximately, are being kept?

(iii) Have there been any prosecutions under the law?

(Notice Paper No. 80 published 1986-06-11)

I wish to point out that it was originally published on May 16, 1984, as No. 64 of the Fourth Parliament and I had to wait from 1984 to 1987 to have this little question dealt with.

[The Minister of Labour (Cde. Prashad): Cde. Speaker, the answer to (i) is 26; the answer to (ii) is two by each employer; the answer to (iii) is yes.]

Question to Ministers - Prisoners' Meals and Mails: 25th March, 1987

[**The Speaker:** Question No. 39 is in the name of Cde. Janet Jagan. It is a Question that requires a written reply.]

Mrs. Jagan: I ask the Question No. 39 standing in my name on the Order Paper:

- (i) *Will the Minister provide a chart of the daily meals for a period of one week at the Mazaruni Prison, having regard to reports that prisoners meals are nutritionally inadequate?*
- (ii) *Will the Minister say why permission for prisoners to send or receive mail has been restricted to once monthly instead of weekly or fortnightly?*

I want to make one point, that is, I asked this Question since September 27, 1983.

[**The Speaker:** If anyone looks at the Order paper he will see that one on page 3.]

[The Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs (Cde. Odie Ali) gave a written reply as follows:

(i) Prisoners' Diet Scale
All Prisons
Daily Issue per Prisoner

MEALS	ITEM	SCALE
Morning	Cassava	5 ozs
	Sugar	5 ozs
	Milk	2 ozs
	Rice	2 ozs
	OR	
	Cornmeal	2 ozs
	OR	
	Flour	2 ozs
	Coffee	1/2 oz
Midday	Rice	6 ozs
	OR	
	Ground Provision	20 ozs
	Fresh Fish	5 ozs
	OR	
	Salt Fish	3 ozs
	OR	
	Beef/Pork	6 ozs
	Cooking Oil	1 oz
	Peas/Beans	1 oz
	Green Vegetables	4 ozs
	Salt	3/8 oz
	Curry Powder	1/16 oz
	Black Pepper	1/32 oz
Condiments	-	
Dinner	Rice	4 ozs
	Fish	3 ozs
	OR	
	Salt Fish	2 ozs
	OR	
	Sugar	2 ozs
	Cooking Oil	1/2 oz
	Green Vegetables	2 ozs
	OR	
	Peas	1 oz
OR		
Beans	1 oz	

Mazaruni Prison Menu from 1987-03-01 to 1987-03-07

Sunday- 1987-03-01	Morning	Cornmeal porridge Eucalyptus tea
	Midday	Rice with minica peas and curry port Salted fish for non meat eaters
	Evening	Rice with minica peas and stew calaloo Sweet sage tea
Monday 1987-03-02	Morning	Rice porridge. Lemon grass tea
	Midday	Cook-up rice with pork and pigeon peas Salted fish for non meat eaters
	Evening	Garnished rice with calaloo and fried salted fish. Lemon grass tea
Tuesday 1987-03-03	Morning	Cassava porridge. Pear tea
	Midday	Rice with pigeon peas with brown sauce Salted Fish
	Evening	Vegetable cook-up with bora; T.I. potatoes; and minica peas. Sweet sage tea
Wednesday 1987-03-04	Morning	Rice porridge. Sweet broom tea
	Midday	Rice with calaloo, minica dholl and salted fish choka
	Evening	Vegetable fry rice with dice pumpkin T.I. potatoes and bora. Pear leaf tea
Thursday 1987-03-05	Morning	Cornmeal porridge, conga pump tea
	Midday	Metemgee with salted fish
	Evening	Rice with pigeon peas with fried fish and brown sauce. Sweet sage tea
Friday 1987-03-06	Morning	Cassava porridge, Eucalyptus tea
	Midday	Fried rice with diced sweet potatoes, pumpkin and bora, fresh fish or beef
	Evening	Rice with minica peas and pork pepper pot, salted fish for non meat eaters
Saturday 1987-03-07	Morning	Rice Porridge. Sweet sage tea
	Midday	Rice with minica peas and pork pepper pot, salted fish for non meat eaters
	Evening	Boiled and fried ground provision with minica stew. Eucalyptus Tea

(ii) Prison Rule #291 contained in Chapter 11:01 of the Laws of Guyana provides that every prisoner shall be allowed to write and receive a letter on reception and thereafter once every month.]

Motion on the Conditions at Georgetown Hospital: 22nd July, 1987

Mrs. Jagan: I must congratulate the Minister of Health for his recent “*first-of-a-kind*” operation. We are sure he has done a good job. Was it the first-of-a-kind operation or was it for the first time they did the operation with light from torch? I am not sure which. If I am not mistaken he, too, has suffered quite a bit from the fact that the electrical generating equipment and the normal electricity are not working as they should.

Nurses are a basic factor in any medical institution and I do not think that we are treating our nurses as they should be treated. I understand that their morale is low, that they have to do many things that they should not have to do. Some of them even have to fetch water; some of them have to run from ward to ward, borrowing equipment, borrowing drugs, trying to keep their own ward functioning. I was surprised to learn – and I would ask the Minister to seriously go into this – that many nurses who have been working for very long periods – some for as much as 30 years – and who are fully trained nurses and midwives are not on our pensionable list. I find that very difficult to understand and I would suggest, if this is so, that every effort should be made to help secure their future. I think they should be part of those in the service of the Government who are entitled to pensions.

The operating rooms, as I mentioned, are having problems and cannot function as before for several reasons, including the fact that the air-conditioning units are not always working and the sterilized equipment and linens and gauzes are not always provided. Also there are shortages of things like oxygen. All these matters are creating problems for surgery. We are happy that the Minister has succeeded in reopening the obstetrics theatre but I understand it cannot yet be fully utilised. Let us hope that it will be fully utilised. Even with the existence of a shortage of patients and the fact that there are many empty beds I saw two patients in a bed at the hospital.

What are we doing about seeing that we have Guyanese to fill the important medical positions? Without their assistance I doubt we would be able to run the Public Hospital. While it is true that they are giving the assistance generously, I think every effort should be made to find persons to fill these posts because Cuban doctors have their own lives to live in their own country. They have contributions to make and also they have to take leave. We have only one paediatrician in the hospital and he is a Cuban. We have only one anaesthetist who is a Cuban. We have only one general surgeon, who is a Cuban and we have only one psychiatrist and one dermatologist, and both are Cubans. We have one Guyanese gynaecologist and two ... We have Guyanese in other fields but the ones I mentioned are very vital to the functioning of a hospital and certainly we should

see that there are Guyanese to fill the posts. Also, we should not be so dependent on another country for providing us with these services.

I want to mention that, on orders from the Minister of Health, patients who come from rural areas are sent back to their areas for treatment. This is no doubt based on the concept of decentralization of our medical services, but we have to look at the reality. Is it working? I am told that while the Medical personnel have to fulfil the directions of the Minister of Health and send away patients who come to the hospital for specific treatment, the reality is that the patients cannot be properly treated in the district hospitals or by the district doctors because they do not have the specialized attention there and, even though our Public Hospital is not supplied with the essentials, it is even much worse in the rural areas. So how are these people going to be treated? It comes to this that many of them get worse and has to come back to the Public Hospital. In turn this increases the medical costs for Government because it is costing us more in the long run.

Are we having the administration of the Public Hospital that is needed for our situation? In the past I can remember there were periods when we had pretty good administration, but it does not look as though we have this going on now. We have? I understand there are problems. I mentioned the fuel vote being 'busted'. Certainly those in charge of the administration should have looked at this long ago. I understand our bill for LIDCO for milk supplied is in arrears and, as a result, we are not getting milk all the time because our bill is so much. I understand the Ministry borrows different things from various private hospitals in Georgetown and Linden. I understand that G.P.C. has supplies of drugs but perhaps because they are not getting paid, and they want to show profits, they sell to private concerns. I understand – I do not have proof but I urge that there be an investigation and this should not be taken lightly – that the bond in Kingston belonging to the Ministry of Health is packed with a lot of important items but no one has gone through them properly and no one knows what is there. Some of the things are rotting, some are expiring and some are stolen. I think that the bond should be that thoroughly examined and a proper investigation made.

The old problem, which still exists, is the quality of food served to our patients. This is still a bone of contention. As one doctor mentioned to me, the meals are substandard, but not only in quality are they substandard. The patients are not given the quantity of food they need. There must be a reason for this. I understand that from the kitchen and even before the kitchen – from the supplier to the kitchen and to the various places to which the food moves there is a loss and by the time the food reaches the plates of the patients a lot of it has gone. A lot of theft is going on. As I mentioned in the beginning, corruption is a sign of life in Guyana over the last two decades. Corruption permeates every aspect of our society. The choice parts of the patients' food are taken away before the food reaches their plates. Maybe the Minister should pay surprise visits at meal time and see if he

himself could sit down and eat the food served to patients. I doubt he would be able to manage it. Anyway, he could try.

In administration and in management we have to be very concerned about persons who work in institutions. We have to show concern and we have to be prepared to make the medical personnel at hospitals feel as though they are wanted and that they are respected.

Mrs. Jagan: (Replying) That may be so, but the fact is that he stressed that I did not deal with facts. I said that there were serious shortages of drugs in the hospital and I made a positive statement that this has led to the death of people. I say it is serious. He has not dealt with the seriousness of it. He had not dealt with the question of the blood bank services, to which I referred. He has not dealt with the shortage of reagents that are necessary for certain tests to go on. You cannot continue without such services. I did mention the fiasco of Thallium Sulphate poisoning and that led us to other things.

I did not give the Minister complaints: I gave criticisms. I was analysing what was wrong. I was not making complaints. I analysed what was wrong and I stressed three aspects of the Public Hospital which were in a serious crisis. I all so mentioned the fact that the poor supplies of electricity have led to very serious problems including even the sterilisation of linens, gauze and instruments required for surgery. The Minister has criticised me for not giving what he would call a correct analysis, which he said should include the mortality rates and infection rates. But where am I going to get those figures? In fact, only today I received the Report of his Ministry for 1986. Why could I not have received it earlier? I may have found something that would have helped in this debate.

I hate to mention this because it is an unpleasant thing to say. The fact is that this Government is not providing the correct mortality rates, particularly the infant mortality rate. That is another subject. He is saying I should provide the mortality rates and the infection rates. I mentioned that patients are acquiring diseases in the wards, that there is an excessive amount of postoperative infections. Let him deal with it specifically and let him tell me how many cases of postoperative infections there are.

The Minister boasts that they have done 1500 surgical cases. I presume he means this year and if he means that they were done this year, which works out to an average of 10 a day, which is not a very heavy load for a big hospital like this, because that would include minor surgery as well as major surgery. So I don't know what that really means. Every hospital of the size of the Public Hospital, Georgetown, should carry a load like that; I don't think it is excessive. I would not want to accuse the Minister of arrogance, but there is a certain arrogance that he is a doctor and I, the Mover, I am not a doctor, I am a politician, I am here to fight for the people's interests and people are interested in having a public hospital that they can feel secure in.

I did not talk about a bed shortage. I corrected myself. We all make errors of speech. I said that first and then I said "*shortage of patients*". I said I saw a large number of empty beds in the hospital and I was wondering why. I don't think that it is because people are not sick. I think a lot of people have lost confidence in the hospital and they are filling up the private hospitals. Secondly, the Minister is forcing doctors to send cases back to the rural areas and that is also removing the number of patients who would otherwise be in the hospital. As I mentioned, many of those persons who are sent back to rural areas are not being properly taken care of.

The Minister has to be able to listen to people and not be arrogant that he is a doctor and I am not. The fact of the matter is that I am not a doctor but I was a Minister of Health and there were few people who offered very strong criticism against me. I was able to function as Minister of Health in the same way that the Minister would no doubt function if they put him in another Ministry. It is a question of application, intelligence and interest in people's welfare.

I would like the Minister to erase from his mind that I am making complaints. I have investigated the hospital and I have come up with certain strong criticisms which he has not answered. I maintain that there is a serious shortage of drugs and this is affecting the welfare of the patients. There is also a serious shortage of facilities in the hospital and these are necessary facilities. I am also saying that the morale of our professional staff is low because of the way the hospital is administered.

Motion on the Public Housing Facilities: 18th December, 1987

Mrs. Jagan: *“WHEREAS persons in the lower income group have been experiencing severe hardship in obtaining housing facilities commensurate with their income;*

AND WHEREAS no effort should be spared in seeking to put an end to overcrowding and in solving this grave social problem;

AND WHEREAS the 1986 Budget provision for public housing was very inadequate:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly recommends to the Government the adoption of a positive programme of public housing and the provision of adequate funds to finance it.”

The lower income family really cannot meet the high cost of buying essential foods and clothing to survive. If we just look at one item in clothing which is essential – shoes, unless we expect our people to walk barefooted – the price of shoes now ranges from \$200 for a simple pair of sandals right up to \$600 and \$1,000. Transportation has gone up for the average working class family. In some cases, transportation may take as much as a quarter of a worker’s income. The cost of electricity has gone up. Everything has gone up.

The Ministry of Housing spent \$3.7 million in 1986 from an allocation of \$4.1 million. In 1987 there was a provision of \$6.24 million, which is, I suppose, an increase because of the higher rates of pay and allowances for those who work in the Ministry, but what I want to examine is what is coming out of the Ministry. What I encountered many years ago when I was Minister and low rental apartments and low income housing units, some by self-help mainly, were being built, the only renewable policy was that of building self-help houses. After our period in Government very little was done insofar as low rental Government housing and low cost housing was concerned. As I said, it was mostly in the field of self-help, which we all endorse. It is a good form, but now there is very little of that going on.

The 1972-1976 Development Plan envisaged the construction of 65,000 housing units at an average rate of 13,000 a year, which was a good idea but unfortunately it was never implemented. In 1976, when the Plan was coming to an end when, according to the ‘blurbs’ of the P.N.C. Government, Guyanese were supposed to be housed, not even 6,000 of the 65,000 housing units had been built and in that 6,000 are included the housing units

done by the private sector. I am talking about new housing units.

The reality is that the housing shortage has created extremely difficult conditions for most people but, of course, it is much harder for the lower income group, those who are unemployed and those who are underemployed. Rents have soared as a consequence and what we are experiencing in the capital city is that very few houses – or almost no houses – are available to the middle and lower income groups. Because of the breaking down of the houses, which I referred to previously, in low income areas, most workers have been forced out of the city to the environs. One can look at the advertisements of buildings and land for sale and see what is happening. They tell their own story. We can look at the Want Advertisements today and compare them with similar advertisements six or eight years ago. We will see advertisements of houses for \$2½ million and such rates. There is hardly any house available today below \$100,000 and when one looks at what is advertised for \$100,000 it is something the size of a chicken coup. So there is really nothing for the man at the bottom. This famous man, who was going to be made into a real man, is now having a terrible time with everything – electricity, water, transportation, food shortages. Perhaps one of the greatest burdens the working man in Guyana bears is that under the present regime he is suffering from very poor housing conditions. What is perhaps even worse is the fact that there is no hope, there is nothing planned.

If one reads the Annual Report of the Ministry of Housing one will see that –

“The Housing Department’s main function is to formulate, implement and monitor national housing policies. This includes the preparation and implementation of housing programmes and projects with the aim of improving the quality and quantity of the national housing.”

I am reading from the Annual Report of the Ministry of Housing for 1986. The report also puts us right at the level I am talking about –

“The targets set for the year with respect to capital works were minimally achieved or not at all because of the non-provision of funds from the Central Government.

... The work of self-help and community administration was handicapped by the unavailability of transport and shortage of funds.”

The Government is just not providing any money for any housing programme. The money that is now allocated and that has been allocated in the last few years is only to keep the bureaucracy going, to pay those officers who are in office. I am not exactly sure what work they are doing, but I suppose they have certain duties. There is no money that you can talk about. Maybe the Minister will tell us of one or two self-help housing units

that are still ambling along. The fact is that no money is being provided; there is no housing programme; there is no future for housing in the country. Inflation is so out of hand that no small man and no middle income man can even think of building his own house. These are the facts. They are very true. The Housing Report shows that the Central Government is not grappling with the chronic and acute housing crisis in the country and is leaving the solution to the private sector. This means that large numbers of workers will continue to remain homeless or will live in terrible crowded conditions, under insanitary conditions, and will be moving from place to place as they can. They will be more squatting, rents will rise further and our slums will continue to deteriorate. The taxpayers of this country are saddled with a bureaucracy and nothing else as far as housing is concerned. The bureaucracy is not producing houses as it is supposed to do.

The small man is out of it. The small man has to pay the black-market price for paint, for cement, for everything in the whole housing syndrome. The irony is that the man at the top gets all the permits, gets all the goods and materials at the right prices, but the little man gets them at the wrong prices. The whole country is topsy-turvy. There must be an attempt to correct it. The small man must not be the man that everybody is wiping his feet on. Everyone wipes his feet on the small man. If there had been no small man there would have been no Guyana. He has been trampled upon; he has been exploited and the housing situation is one of the means of exploitation. I think that much of the money we have at our disposal is being wasted. Many times during the Budget Debate we point out that millions of dollars are going down the drain in the wrong direction. Why cannot we subsidise low income rentals and low income housing as well as control the prices? It is the duty of a Government to see that the people have a chance to live under decent conditions. They must not live like chickens and pigs as many of them have to do at the present time.

I would say that we must take a serious view of this; we must have a housing programme that is real, that can be applied, that has an allocation of enough funds and has enough control so that something can be produced. That is what I am requesting in this Motion which I put before the Assembly.

Mrs. Jagan: (Replying) Cde. Speaker, it is regrettable that the speaker, in his maiden speech, which he presented very well, could come to wrong conclusion. Certainly this Motion before the Assembly is one that cannot really be thrust aside on a partisan basis because the Opposition Party has brought it forward. That is ridiculous. We are talking about human needs. We are talking about people surviving in this world. You are unable, totally unable, to discuss the present situation. I could have gone back and discussed what happened many years ago. It is so ridiculous to talk about what happened before. That is pretty bad.

This whole period of 20 odd years has been a terrible period for discrimination and corruption in housing. I have not gone into that. I was dealing with the needs of our society today and I don't think it is correct that this should be pushed aside with rosy talk about "*how much we have done*" and "*what we are doing.*" You are doing nothing. There is nothing of any comparable nature going on to ease the housing situation. The speaker was talking about a period when we had loans at 6 percent. I read you a release from this Government increasing the government loans to 14 percent. Is that going forward or backward? Let us be realistic.

Talking about the private sector, during 1986 and 1987, two financial firms dropped out of housing. The Guyana Mortgage and Finance Company and the Guyana Housing and Development Company have ceased giving housing loans. They transferred to the New Building Society. We are going downward. The New Building Society, is it giving loans to middle and lower income groups? It cannot. It is hidebound by the realities of making loans. It has to evaluate the total income of the applicant and that has to be in the thousands in order to get a loan with which to build a house.

Let us be realistic. The private sector cannot do anything. It is impossible. The private sector is building for the high income housing group. Those are the realities of life and the very Government which sits before us has found it necessary to raise the interest on housing loans. Where are we? I cannot understand it. We must go through the pathetic stance that this Government uses every time it is reminded of its responsibilities, where we are told that all the Third World countries are in trouble and we are in trouble too. What kind of answer is that? Not all the Third World countries have what Guyana has. Not all Third World countries could come out of this in a very realistic position. We have resources but we don't have administrators, we don't have correct policies. We don't know where we are going. The country is corrupt.

Motion of Sympathy on Death of Dr. Oliver Harper: 1st December, 1994

“BE IT RESOLVED: That this National Assembly record its deep regret at the death of Dr. Oliver Harper 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 Health:

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

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

Mrs. Jagan: I rise to second this Motion of Sympathy. I have had the good fortune to know Monty Harper quite well for many years. We had a mutual friend in the United States and through this person I got to know Dr. Harper.

I can recall – and I agree with the previous speaker – that he was a man of great humanity. I have the recollection that when he was Minister of Health he did a great service to us. He did not put himself in the narrow channel of party politics but was a good friend all around.

During the period that he was Minister of Health, one of the leading Members of the People’s Progressive Party, Isahak Basir, who served in this Assembly for many years was harassed and persecuted by the police in Essequibo, resulting in an unwarranted attack on his life. He was shot in the abdomen by a policeman. The Suddie Hospital was incapable of dealing with the situation. I saw the necessity that he should be brought to Georgetown. I spoke to the Minister of Health who arranged air transport and brought him to the hospital. The two of us were at the hospital in the operating room section. His interest was intense. He stood by all the time until Basir’s life was ensured and we knew that he would be safe. So, we are, of course, grateful to Dr. Harper for showing that particular interest and for having a broad humanitarian outlook.

It was with regret that we heard of his death. To his family, his children, his wife and all those who are left behind, we offer our deepest sympathy.

Motion on the Second Reading of the Trade Union Recognition Bill: 19th January, 1995

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to make a contribution to this debate to bring in the perspective of the historical process which is so important in the Bill and which the Minister referred to.

I believe I am the only Member of this House who was present in the 1953 Parliament when the Bill was brought to the House. Those who can remember history – and I am just putting it here for the record – will know one of the reasons for the P.P.P. Government of the 1953 bringing the Labour Relations Bill was because a very large contingent of our working class was not allowed to have the union of their choice negotiate on their behalf. I refer to the situation where the Guyana Industrial Workers Union, representing the bulk of the sugar workers, was not recognized and was refused recognition because the sugar bosses preferred to deal with the M.P.C.A. which was a company union.

Due to the politics of that period, and what our Minister referred to as the global environment, this Labour Relations Bill became part of the British Government's reason for suspending the Constitution and removing the duly elected Government from office. There is no doubt that the Labour Relations Bill was a considerable factor in their decision because of the fear that sugar workers would have a voice in the nations' major industry and might, perhaps, reduce profits in that industry.

In 1963, the P.P.P. Government brought back the Labour Relations Bill and at this time one of the persons involved in the 1953 Government whose decision was unanimous on the bill, Mr. Forbes Burnham, was then with the Opposition which decided to struggle against this Bill. I wanted to read short passages from a book by Aston Chase, who was the Minister of Labour in the 1953 Government and who channelled this Bill through the House of Assembly. In his book, he refers to 1963 Labour Relations Bill and he says:

"The Bill in substance was along the lines of similar enactments in the Commonwealth Caribbean. It provides for a poll of working people in the area of industrial relations in order to settle issues of trade union recognition and for the compulsory recognition by employers of trade unions that has the support of the majority of the work force."

Certain trade unions in the British Guiana Trades Union Council (T.U.C.) were hostile to this measure as they were conscious they could not command a majority in a poll, in this instance, it was the national environment that brought about the demise of the Labour Relations Bill because in the situation at that time, the President of the T.U.C. was also the President of

the M.P.C.A. which, again, was fearful of losing the recognition it had with the sugar companies. An eighty days strike was called and Mr. Chase says this,

"The chief ally of the P.N.C./T.U.C. in the eighty days strike was the C.I.A., the Central Intelligence Agency of the USA."

It was from American sources, principally, that finance to fuel the strike was provided. The US trade unionists took part in the planning and direction of the strike, and their dominance of the local trade union movement continued for many years after this strike.

Now, forty years after the first attempt to bring about the Labour Relations Bill, I am happy to again be in the Parliament that for the third time is dealing with this historic Bill.

[Applause]

Mrs. Jagan: Times have changed. The global and the national situation is different from 1953 and 1963. And it is rewarding to know that in this Parliament, as far as I am aware, all the Parties belonging to this Parliament are in support in this Bill, in its essence. There may be differences about the clauses.

I think this Bill is very important, and I only wish to say these few words to put in perspective the historical aspect of the Bill, and to say that today is a very great day in Guyana.

[Applause]

Motion on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations: 24th November, 1995

[Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs: *“Whereas the United Nations was established at the end of the Second World War in 1945 to, **inter alia**, “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” and “to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”,*

And whereas its charter which defined the purpose, principles, functions and structure of the Organisation offers member states a comprehensive framework for international cooperation;

And whereas notwithstanding its imperfections, the United Nations continues to enjoy the confidence of the international community as evidenced by its almost universal membership;

And whereas Guyana having been admitted into membership on 20 September 1966 is proud to be a member in good standing of the United Nations for the past twenty-nine years;

Be it resolved:

That this National Assembly salute the United Nations on its Fiftieth Anniversary,

And Be it Further Resolved:

That this National Assembly gives its full support to the United Nations as it continues to discharge its mandate in the new circumstance of the post-Cold War World.”]

Mrs. Jagan: The Motion in connection with the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations in the name of the Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs, speaks for itself. I want to bring to the attention of this House some of the meaningful and worthwhile activities of the United Nations during its 50 years of existence, which we are commemorating and recognising today.

The main function of the United Nations when it was set up in 1945 was for the settlement of averting to wars and conflicts. There have been several wars and many conflicts since the United Nations began, but if we examine everything quite closely we cannot help but come to the conclusion that if there was not a United Nations, the number of wars and conflicts would have been devastating. There would have been more deaths, more destruction, more refugees, more suffering.

The United Nations has been very active in many peacekeeping operations. There have been thirty-five since 1945. This has helped in ending conflicts, the conflict, for example, between Iran and Iraq, the civil wars in El Salvador, Cambodia, and Mozambique.

Guyana has participated in at least three of the peacekeeping missions - one of them was that of Cyprus, recently El Salvador and Haiti - so that we have also been a part of the peacekeeping missions and the efforts to keep the lid on wars and conflicts.

The United Nations was the catalyst for the decolonisation that took place since 1945. The Committee on Decolonisation gave encouragement and support to many countries including Guyana. I can remember speaking - I believe it was to the Committee on Decolonisation and I believe all the efforts made by Guyanese to end the period of decolonisation were greatly assisted by the United Nations.

The UN Declaration on Human Rights has been our guide in Guyana for many years. It has almost been a Bible to many of us who have struggled through the years to attain full justice and the realisation of human rights, the freedom of information, the right to have free and fair elections, all of which are enunciated in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

The many violations that took place in Guyana through the years were reported. We were guided by the Declaration on Human Rights which set out the rights we should enjoy; particularly in the area of choosing the Government that the people want by free and fair elections.

The United Nations fashioned comprehensive agreements on political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights, the Declaration on Human Rights was adopted in 1948. The United Nations was successful in negotiating more than 300 International Treaties. These International Treaties dealt with questions of human rights, agreements on the use of outer space and nuclear weapons, et cetera.

Very important work has been done by the United Nations, as all of us here know, for the protection of children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was passed in 1989 and following this work done for children's health and welfare has been phenomenal. The United Nations agencies were responsible for the immunisation of 90 percent of the world's children.

On the question of women's rights, the work of the United Nations is unparalleled. To begin with, the United Nations Charter of 1945 was the first International Instrument to establish the principle of equality for men and women. This is very important. In 1946 the United Nations established a Commission on the Status of Women, to promote women's political, economic and social rights. Right through the years the work done for women's rights has been respected throughout the world and in particular by women's rights group.

In 1952 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women. It was the first global endorse-

ment of equal political rights under the law including the equal right to vote.

In 1960, the I.L.O. Convention concerning discrimination in respect to employment and occupation was adopted and in 1962 the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage, all of which guaranteed women's rights. The Declaration in 1967 on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women continued to focus on women's issues.

The World Conference on Human Rights that took place in Vienna in 1993 integrated violence against women and other women's human rights issues into the overall United Nations Human Rights agenda and activities. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women was also adopted by the General Assembly. The U.N.'s record on women's rights is phenomenal.

The United Nations brought our attention to the rights of the indigenous people throughout the world, to their welfare and their progress, and devoted a year to this purpose. It devoted another year to the strengthening of the family so that people throughout world would recognise the need for a strong family unit.

More recently it has devoted a year to the building of tolerance by all people. The United Nations through its agencies has brought drinking water to 1.3 billion people all over the world and, as we know, the United Nations was active in the ending of the apartheid regime of South Africa. Great credit will go to the United Nations for the consistent work it did in this field.

In the protection of the environment, the United Nations has held important conferences, the one in Rio, for example, and it has raised the level of understanding and interest in the environment. Also, the United Nations' interest in the controlling of nuclear weapons and the nonproliferation of weapons to be used in outer space and in the sea-beds has also been important. It has brought humanitarian assistance to tens of millions of people.

I want to read something from a little booklet commemorating the United Nations' 50th Anniversary, put out by the United Nations Information Bureau. I think it is a fitting way to end my contribution to this debate on the motion. I quote from this booklet:

"Why is the United Nations' 50th Commemoration so important? The anniversary is an opportunity for the world community to look anew at the U.N.'s work, not just in keeping peace but in economic and social development, democratization, human rights, humanitarian affairs and environmental action and to rethink the way the United Nations deals with these concerns. A major role of the yearlong commemoration is to build and to strengthen the kind of enlightened constituency needed for the United Nations to succeed in the future."

In Guyana we have been the beneficiaries of a great deal of assistance in many forms from the United Nations agencies and I wish to express praise for the committee which was set up to arrange all the various celebrations for the United Nations' 50 Anniversary. I think they did a very fine job.

[Applause]

Mrs. Jagan: (Replying) In appreciation of all the good work the United Nations has done and in the words of the Motion here of wishing all the very best to the United Nations in its 50th anniversary, I think I can say with all assurance that there is no difference of opinion in the high regard the National Assembly has for the United Nations and all the good work it has done all these years.

I am sure on behalf of all parties of this Assembly I can express the assurance that we will all do our very best to give support to all the United Nations' activities, to make it stronger so that its work in the world will be even more meaningful than it has been.

[Applause]

Address by Her Excellency the President to the National Assembly: 26th February, 1998

Mrs. Jagan: Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members of the National Assembly, this is indeed a remarkable occasion.

Today, as I address you as the first woman Head of State, fond memories of the long and hard struggles of our people come to mind. I particularly recall the plight of women in the late forties and the early fifties. I remember the courage of many women who came forward in those dangerous times to join the struggle.

A momentous occasion was when in 1953, I was among the first three women ever to be elected to Parliament after we had just completed a vigorous electoral campaign. For me it was doubly difficult since in my constituency, the Essequibo, which I won, my gender was a central issue as I had to do battle with two wealthy, macho landowners.

Our victory in 1953, and the spirit of oneness and togetherness which accompanied it, was like the end of a long eclipse which had engulfed our nation. That day, May 30, 1953, was a proud moment as the P.P.P. Parliamentarians, with Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham at the lead, marched from the Party's headquarters to Parliament Buildings for the opening ceremony.

We were all dressed in white sharkskin suits, the men wearing red ties and the women with red shoes, handbags, scarves and hats. Dr. Jagan would have preferred a more modest mode of dress, but nevertheless, we were all confident of the future and filled with patriotic fervour to start a process of genuine independence and economic and social progress.

The process began, but was soon affected by many difficulties. These did not, however, deter us as a nation and we moved to Independence and then to Republican status. Today, as I look back, we understand that there are many interpretations of our history, but at some point, we, as a nation, must have a common approach to our history, our difficulties and where we go from here.

As a nation we have to constantly move forward. We cannot turn back. We have to live with our history. It is ours and the most we could do at this point is to learn the lessons that that history has taught us. Our past should not divide us but give us strength and deepen our commitment to pursue boldly the interest of the nation and the people. We must understand our unique cultural experience and realise that our oneness as a nation transcends the sum of its parts.

Mr. Speaker, today's events are yet another milestone in our commitment to advance the process of electoral democracy. The configuration of this Parliament is based on the free expression of the will of the Guyanese electorate. We salute the electorate for the peaceful manner in which they

exercised their franchise on December 15. We are grateful that they made it possible for the P.P.P./Civic to continue in office.

Only yesterday when I met a goodwill team of Prime Ministers from the Caribbean Community, I impressed upon them the importance of the Parliamentary Opposition to play their part to make a success of the Accord signed on January 17, 1998. Those attracted to extra-parliamentary tactics must understand that the ultimate losers will be Guyana.

It takes two hands to clap. Cooperation is by no means a one-way process and our desire for compromise and peace should not be confused with either weakness, fears and doubts whatsoever, nor about our understanding of governance based on the freely expressed will of the electorate.

We will continue to honour the Accord made with the CARICOM team headed by Sir Henry Forde. I must, however, stress that the successful conclusions of such efforts will depend in part on the cooperation forthcoming from the Opposition Members elected to this Parliament. No unfair burden should be placed on only one side. This much should be clear to them as it is for us and also those well meaning people of CARICOM who appreciate the functioning of the multiparty democratic process and the role of the security forces and the justice administration system in the collective efforts to ensure good governance.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to acknowledge the presence of the Honourable Dr. Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada and current Chairman of CARICOM and the Honourable Mr. Owen Arthur, Prime Minister of Barbados.

[Applause]

Mrs. Jagan: This, the Seventh Parliament of our Republic, will take us into the 21st Century. This is an historic opportunity for the highest forum of the land to rise to the occasion and with a deep sense of responsibility give the guidance needed to face the challenges of the next millennium. Yours will be the unenviable task to uphold the nation's motto of "*One People, One Nation, One Destiny*". Let not your individual preferences and persuasions deprive this nation and our people of the mature leadership necessary to bring our people together and build a prosperous nation.

As it is with a solar eclipse, darkness and difficulties are transient and must give way to light and hope which are permanent.

A fundamental edifice of our democracy is parliamentary democracy. In this noble hall will emerge important laws which must first benefit from enlightened and comprehensive examination by all those who take their seats in this august Chamber to represent the people. In this context, Mr. Speaker, allow me to refer to the words of our late President Cheddi Jagan, made during his speech at the Ceremonial Opening of the Sixth Parliament in 1992. I quote:

"It is true that a fundamental characteristic of democracy is that the will of the majority prevails over that of the minority. But the minority must be able to rest assured that decisions have been taken only after opposing views have been expressed. That alone must be cause for comfort. And that alone must assure the electorate that parliamentary democracy is being practised for the collective good of the nation." [The Parliamentary Debates. 17th December, 1992, Columns 25/26]

I understand that there were 105 sittings of the Assembly during the life of the Sixth Parliament. This was better than in previous years. It is important that the National Assembly hold sessions as often as possible and that on major issues there be consensus among the major political forces in the country.

Given the fact that Guyana is undergoing reforms in many vital areas and that many of our laws need to be modernised in keeping with the times. I foresee a packed Parliamentary agenda. This will be made even more pressing when important matters such as constitutional reform, the National Development Strategy and matters of race relations are undertaken.

In recent times, the work of Parliament has improved. There are ongoing plans for a first-class library to assist Parliamentarians in their duties. I hope that this project will be completed shortly and that we will have a well-stocked and staffed library. Also, in recent years, the production of *Hansard* has improved dramatically. This is an important aspect of the life of Parliament and should at all times be of the highest standard and efficiency.

Our Government placed much emphasis on the Select Committee process in Parliament whereby controversial legislation is referred to a special body comprising representatives of all political parties in the National Assembly. In this way important legislation is passed on the basis of consensus.

The P.P.P./Civic Government has put mechanisms in place to bring transparency at all levels. As a matter of policy, major contracts and agreements are laid in Parliament. Of special importance is the presentation of Government Accounts. As you know, the Public Accounts, prior to 1992, were delayed for many, many years. Under the P.P.P./Civic Government, the Public Accounts have been up-to-date. Already tabled in Parliament are the accounts for 1996 and by September this year the accounts for 1997 will be ready.

The Sixth Parliament passed the integrity legislation which will take this process even further. Top government and state officials, including Members of Parliament, will be required to declare their assets. Very soon the necessary administrative mechanisms will be in place for us to start this new feature in the life of Government. In view of the massive amount of work envisaged and the dedication and commitment it will take time to get the job done.

I take this opportunity in congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and all other Members of the Assembly for taking up this challenge. Though your task will be difficult, I am sure it will also be exciting. Your task must be to bring pride to the Guyanese people and take the lead in the creation of a truly united, cohesive and prosperous Guyana. Parliament must be part of the people's daily lives and must reflect the people's will and aspirations.

In 1992, Guyana returned to the fold of democratic nations and since then democracy has flourished in our land. The democratic Sixth Parliament entrusted with the task of preserving the rights and interests of all citizens, paved the way for local government elections. These were held in 1994 after an absence of some twenty years. This has helped to deepen the democratic involvement of our people and has opened up great opportunities for local communities to apply their creative abilities in a development process.

The consolidation of our democratic gains and the deepening of its content in keeping with the wishes of the people is an essential factor in modernising our social and economic experience. Democracy opens up avenues for us to intensify solidarity and cohesion in our society. It gives citizens a greater sense of belonging to the collective and allows for the flourishing of voluntary organisations and interest groups.

It was during the life of the Sixth Parliament that steps were taken to create the necessary legal and other conditions for the 1997 general elections. The Parliamentary process was greatly assisted by inter-party consultations and agreement on all issues which led to free and fair elections. The elections of December 15, 1997, as attested to by local and foreign observers, saw the people of Guyana freely expressing their will as to who should hold the reins of government. The P.P.P./Civic Government which I now lead, went to the electorate with a proud record of achievement and was given the mandate for a second term.

As we move ahead in institutionalising a democratic culture, experience has shown that young and fragile democracies such as ours can witness open battles based on past rivalries, creation of new tensions along ethnic lines while control over the state and its institutions becomes an obsessive objective.

While democracy emphasises freedom of the individual, it is also founded on the will of the collective. That balance must always be kept in focus since the pursuit of freedoms could take the direction of defining personal ambitions which have little to do with political representation or the exercise of tolerance for the rights of others. Extreme individualism can lead to intolerance and contempt for the rights of others. Democracy does not mean a free-for-all. It carries with it high standards and responsibilities on the individual and the society.

Mr. Speaker, good governance, the maintenance of law and order, respect for fundamental human rights and an independent judiciary, service

commissions and state institutions are important aspects of the democratic fabric which leads to security and hope. These are fundamental principles especially in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society such as ours. Sustained economic growth and equal distribution of the national wealth create grounds for peace and harmony among different peoples. At the same time, underdevelopment, poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunities cause severe strains and provide the breeding grounds for tensions and feelings of insecurity.

Devising a strategy for harmonious development for all Guyanese is of central importance. Tensions and divisions are not inevitable and realistic methods can be found to accommodate the needs of all our citizens. In the coming period we have to consider innovative and imaginative ways to hammer out appropriate arrangements for the development of all sections of the population.

There is always need for more understanding and tolerance. Education and open, mature discussions can favourably influence the relations between various groups in the society. At all times, any serious attempt to deal with issues of insecurity based on ethnicity, class, gender, etc. must be firmly relevant to our specific, historical experience. Furthermore, a society which aspires to bring together people must adopt tough policies and take strong actions against those whose objectives are aimed at stirring up hatred, discrimination, harassment and violence.

Over the years we have improved on the overall management of our economic affairs in circumstances that were not always propitious. Gross Domestic Product continues to grow while the inflation has settled at a low level. Through astute debt management and a successful lobby overseas we have received significant debt relief. Private and public investments in critical sectors of the economy are providing new jobs, higher wages, better and expanded infrastructure directly related to production. The Government, through more efficient revenue collection and the fight against corruption and graft, was able to increase significantly budgetary allocations to the social sectors, badly neglected for years. Development can be seen everywhere and in practically every aspect of life.

In a week or two, the 1998 National Budget will be presented and that will be the most appropriate time to discuss the state of the economy and the plans for the coming period. I want to forewarn, however, that there are many urgent problems to resolve.

In recent times, prices of our main exports – rice, sugar, and gold – on the international market have fallen. Further, the El Nino weather phenomenon which ushered in a prolonged dry period is having negative effects on our main economic activities. Indications are that in a few months we can expect unusually high rainfall and its attendant problems. This could eventually affect foreign earnings and the development programme even when production volume continues to grow. These are issues which would need to combine efforts of all Guyanese to find lasting solutions.

While we grapple with these and other problems as they evolve, there is a continuing programme which will see further development in roads, sea defence, schools, health, power and water services. Apart from these, major new projects will be undertaken and already Cabinet has decided on measures to speed-up the process of putting these on track. These will include improvements of airport facilities, deep water harbour services, new drainage and irrigation schemes such as the M.M.A., Phase 1 & II, the East Canje River Scheme, the Cozier Scheme, the bridging of the Berbice River, the completion of the Georgetown Linden Road, among others. Many new projects are in the pipeline, such as a new clay brick facility, a bicycle factory and a large scale fruit and vegetable farm. Additionally, a major focus will be land reform which will see increased distribution of land for various purposes, especially housing, agriculture and industry. The decision to give land titles to Amerindians will continue apace.

A qualitative improvement in management and efficiency at all levels of the public sector is to be undertaken. By this, it is intended to create a higher level of investor friendliness, provide more efficient services to the public and more rational use of public funds.

We believe that the commitments we made to the electorate during the 1997 election campaign will serve to enhance our potential as a nation. A general outline of the major planks of the P.P.P./Civic's second term as captured in its Manifesto is as follows:

- Consolidate the ongoing democratic reforms.
- Continue to create economic opportunities for all Guyanese.
- Accelerate human resource development through expansion of education and training facilities.
- Ensure every individual is able to own his or her home,
- Continue to develop infrastructure to support rapidly expanding economic development.
- Further build the framework for the full integration of our indigenous people, our women and youth in national development.
- Advance ongoing reforms in the judicial and law enforcement systems to ensure a fair and just society.
- Sustain and enhance our efforts to establish Guyana as a proud and forceful nation in the world community.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to expand on two aspects of this framework. Firstly, my administration has already started the process of seeking funding for a comprehensive review of our judicial system to enhance the justice system in Guyana. We are to enter into broad consultation to find the correct method of approaching this matter. As soon as we can get this phase completed, the Government will seek funding for a comprehensive national project to modernise the system and improve its capacity to fulfil its role in

a timely and efficient manner.

Secondly, the Government strongly believes that the area of youth, sports and culture is important to our national development efforts. Unfortunately, in the past this area did not attract the attention it deserved. It is an area in which conditions can be created for a more harmonious society based on understanding and respect. As a result we have created a separate Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture and it has been decided that a major portion of the proceeds of the Guyana Lottery will be utilised in the creation and upgrading of sports and other recreational facilities. As a start, approximately \$150 million from the Lottery proceeds will be used in this sector, with \$50 million earmarked for Georgetown and its immediate environs.

Mr. Speaker, Guyana continues to expand its relations with the outside world. We must continue to do so in a spirit of friendship and cooperation with all countries. There are many great opportunities for Guyana to pursue a foreign policy which will protect our nation and at the same time bring concrete benefits to our people. Our immediate interest is to deepen and widen our relations with CARICOM and play a positive role in integrating our region. Yesterday we took a positive step forward in making Guyana the permanent home of the CARICOM Secretariat whereby a new complex will be built to satisfy the needs of the Secretariat.

[Applause]

Mrs. Jagan: We will continue our friendly relations with countries of Central and Latin America, especially neighbouring Venezuela, Brazil and Surinam. At the same time our traditional ties with Great Britain, Canada and the United States and others will be taken to higher levels.

As we interact with the outside world, Guyana must create for itself a special place if we are to make an impact and benefit from what others have to offer. In a globalised and liberalised world, Guyana must carefully assess the patterns and processes of world development. Small developing countries must guard against those policies and practices and economic liberalisation which are not in concert with national goals and priorities.

While Guyana's entry into the global market place has brought gains, there have also been tendencies which could lead to wage levels that are considered inadequate by organised labour, increase in unemployment and poverty, more taxation and higher levels of national indebtedness. At the end of the day, these serve to accentuate economic and social insecurity, deepen class distinctions and alienate large sections of people from the mainstream of development. As we become more integrated into the global marketplace, we must strive to subject global processes to the national cause and channel benefits to our people.

The P.P.P./Civic Government is committed to economic growth in an open economy where the state and private sectors play their respective roles.

This growth must be distributed in such a manner that the end result must be continuing human development since we are committed to a vision in which people are the centre of development.

In our programme for restructuring the economy, we must keep in mind that in many countries the position of the masses of people has been weakened leading to great inequalities, both in terms of economic wellbeing and access to political power. It is important that you in your deliberations take cognisance of the need to seek always a balance of interest and that in your actions all sections of the population must, and must be seen to benefit without any bias to favour of any section.

In considering the specific conditions of Guyana *vis-à-vis* the more prosperous countries, the P.P.P./Civic strongly promoted the idea of a Regional Integration Fund which is intended to assist poorly developed countries to benefit equally in the rapidly evolving process of free trade in the hemisphere and the world.

This initiative has attracted support from other countries and we should work with them to realise such a fund. Guyana must continue to pursue the goals of understanding and cooperation since many of the problems faced by mankind are global in nature and would need a global response.

That response must of necessity take into consideration the interest of the hundreds of millions of people who today cannot afford even the basic necessities for survival. This will not be easy but we must take courage from the fact that many of the demands of developing countries, which once seemed idealistic, are today accepted as important contributions to the search for global solutions to problems. That is why it is important to pursue the high purpose of the new Global Human Order as outlined by our late President, Dr. Cheddi Jagan. This Parliament, Mr. Speaker, is therefore at the centre of Guyana's policy at home and abroad.

Once again, I wish to congratulate all Members of Parliament who have taken the Oath of Office and ask that you become the custodians of Guyana's multiparty, parliamentary democracy.

In conclusion, I want to appeal to all Guyanese to live in harmony and to remember the words of our National Anthem:

Great Land of Guyana, diverse though our strains,
We are born of their sacrifice, heirs of their pains;
And ours is the glory their eyes did not see –
One land of six peoples, united and free.

I end by repeating what I said at the National Park at the Flag Raising Ceremony to mark the 28th Anniversary of our Republic.

To all Guyanese from Crabwood Creek to Charity, from the Atlantic Coast to the Rupununi, I offer you the hand of friendship and solidarity of my Government.

[Applause]

