

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, 30 January 1981

10:00 a.m.

Members present:

The Speaker, the Honourable Mr C.B. Hyde, M.B.E.
The Honourable Mr G. Price (Freetown), Premier and
Minister of Finance
The Honourable Mr V.H. Courtenay (Collet), Minister
of State
The Honourable Mr D.L. McKoy (Stann Creek Rural),
Minister of Labour, Social Services and
Community Development
The Honourable Mr F.H. Hunter (Belize Rural North),
Minister of Works
The Honourable Mr F.J. Marin (Corozal South), Minister
of Natural Resources
The Honourable Mr G. Pech (Orange Walk South), Minister
of Trade and Industry
The Honourable Mr Louis S. Sylvestre (Belize Rural South),
Minister of Energy and Communications
The Honourable Mr A. Shoman (Cayo North), Minister of
Health, Housing and Co-operatives
The Honourable Mr S. Musa (Fort George), Attorney General
and Minister of Education and Sports
The Honourable Mr E. Briceño (Orange Walk North),
Minister of Local Government and Social Security
The Honourable Mr S.O. Waight (Cayo South), Parliamentary
Secretary, Ministry of Works
The Honourable Mrs. J. Usher (Pickstock), Parliamentary
Secretary, Ministry of Health, Housing and
Co-operatives
The Honourable Mr V. Castillo (Corozal North), Deputy
Speaker
The Honourable Mr T. Aranda (Dangriga)
The Honourable Mr C. Thompson (Mesopotamia)
The Honourable Mr C. Wagner (Toledo South)
The Honourable Mr B. Ah (Toledo North)
The Honourable Mr P.S.W. Goldson (Albert)

MR SPEAKER in the Chair.

PRAYERS read by Mr Speaker.

PETITIONS

HON. V. CASTILLO (Deputy Speaker): Mr Speaker, I rise
to introduce a Petition for the Incorporation of the Iglesia
Evangelica El Calvario (Belize).

MR SPEAKER. Let the Petition be read.

HON. V. CASTILLO (Deputy Speaker): "BELIZE: IN THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES A.D. 1981 First Session 1981.

Petition for leave to introduce a Bill to provide
for the incorporation of the IGLESIA EVANGELICA EL
CALVARIO (BELIZE).

/To....

To: The Honourable the Members of the House of Representatives of Belize as in session assembled.

The Humble Petition of the Iglesia Evangelica El Calvario (Belize).

1. The object of this Bill is to incorporate the IGLESIA EVANGELICA EL CALVARIO as a body corporate over the activities of the Church of that name.
2. Your Petitioners have the Bill of which a copy is hereunto annexed to be prepared for giving effect to the purposes set forth above in the preamble of the said Bill.
3. The Notices of advertisement in the Government Gazette and in a Newspaper circulating in the country in accordance with the Standing Orders of Your Honourable House have been published.
4. The objects of the said Bill cannot be effected without the authority of the National Assembly.

Your Petitioner, therefore, humbly prays Your Honourable House that leave may be given to bring in the said Bill.

And Your Petitioner will ever pray, etc. etc. etc.

For and on behalf of the Iglesia Evangelica el Calvario (Belize)

By its Chairman of the Committee of Management.

President (Sgd.) Edwardo Yacab
Secretary (Sgd.) Solomon Yacab"

PAPERS

HON. G. PRICE (Premier and Minister of Finance): I rise, Mr Speaker, to lay on the Table, Sessional Paper 75A - White Paper for the Proposed Terms of a Constitution for the Independent Belize.

MR SPEAKER: That Paper is ordered to lie on the Table.

HON. E. BRICEÑO (Minister of Local Government and Social Security): Mr Speaker, I rise to lay on the Table, Sessional Paper No. HR76/1/4 - Belize City (Rates)(Amendment) By-Laws, 1980; No. HR 77/1/4 - Social Security (Registration of Employers and Employed Persons)Regulations, 1980; No. HR78/1/4 - Social Security (Collection of Contributions) Regulations, 1980; No. HR79/1/4 - Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations, 1980; No. HR80/1/4 - Social Security (Benefit) Regulations, 1980; No. HR81/1/4 - Social Security (Determination of Claims and Questions) Regulations,1980; No. 82/1/4 - Social Security (Insurance Stamps) Regulations, 1980; No. HR83/1/4 - Social Security (Contributions) Regulations, 1980; No. HR84/1/4 - Social Security (Financial and Accounting) Regulations, 1980; No. HR85/1/4 - Social Security (Classification) Regulations, 1980; No. HR86/1/4 - Social Security (Voluntary Contributors and Persons Abroad) Regulations, 1980.

MR SPEAKER: Those Papers are ordered to lie on the Table.

/PRESENTATION.....

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

HON. V.H. COURTENAY (Minister of State): Mr Speaker, I beg to make a report of the Health, Education and Welfare Committee on the Dangerous Drugs (Amendment) Bill, 1981.

In performing the duties to them referred, your Committee held its Meeting on the 26 January 1981.

Your Committee has gone through the Bill clause by clause and have agreed that it be returned to the House for Second Reading without amendment.

Minutes of the 'proceedings' of the Meeting held are attached and form part of this Report.

MR SPEAKER: That Report is ordered to lie on the Table.

HON. S. MUSA (Attorney General and Minister of Education and Sports): Mr Speaker, I beg to make a report of the Special Select Committee on the New Apostolic Church Belize Bill, 1980.

In considering the matter to them referred, your Committee held its meeting on 23 November 1980.

Your Committee has gone through the Bill clause by clause and has agreed that it be returned to the House for Second Reading with the following amendment:-

"delete clause 7"

Copies of the proceedings of the Meeting held are attached and form part of this Report.

Mr Speaker, I wish to make a report of the Special Select Committee on the Iglesia Universal Cristiana (Belize) Bill, 1980.

In considering the matter to them referred, your Committee held its meeting on the 28 November 1980.

Your Committee has gone through the Bill clause by clause and has agreed that it be returned to the House for Second Reading with the following amendment:-

"delete clause 7"

Copies of the proceedings of the meeting held are attached and form part of this Report.

I believe that there's one more report, Mr Speaker, on the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Belize Evangelical Mennonite Church Bill, 1980.

In considering the matter to them referred, your Committee held its meeting on 23 November 1980.

Your Committee has gone through the Bill clause by clause and has agreed that it be returned to the House for Second Reading without amendment.

/Copies....

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Copies of the proceedings of the Meeting held are attached and form part of this Report.

MR SPEAKER: Those Reports are ordered to lie on the Table.

HON. G. PECH (Minister of Trade and Industry): Mr Speaker, I rise to present a report of the Ways and Means Committee on the Loan to the Government of Belize - Caribbean Development Bank.

In considering the matter to them referred, your Committee held its meeting on 26 January 1981 and heard evidence given in explanation of the Motion by the Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Mrs. C. Hyde.

The Committee have therefore considered the Motion and have agreed that it be returned to the House for adoption.

Copies of the proceedings of the meeting held are attached and form part of this report.

MR SPEAKER: That Report is ordered to lie on the Table.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

HON. G. PRICE (Premier and Minister of Finance): Earlier today, Mr Speaker, I laid on the Table of this Honourable House a White Paper containing Government's proposals for the new Constitution of Belize on our attainment of independence.

Honourable Members, it is the intention of the Government of Belize to agree with the Government of the United Kingdom within the next few weeks a date for a Constitutional Conference. This Conference will prepare for the independence of Belize to take place before the end of this year. The Belize delegation to this Conference will include members from both the Government and the Opposition.

This is the will of the majority of our Belizean people, who have given the People's United Party the mandate to lead Belize to a safe and secure independence with all our territory.

The attainment of our goal of independence also has the backing of the international community. Members will recall that only a few months ago the United Nations, by a vote of 139 to none against, declared that Belize should become an independent nation before the conclusion of the next Session of the General Assembly and called upon the United Kingdom to convene a Constitutional Conference to prepare for the independence of Belize. This position was endorsed a few weeks later by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States.

The independence of Belize will be a safe and secure independence. The United Kingdom Government has assured the Government of Belize that it will see us safely through independence. The details of this defence arrangement will be more clearly defined and finalised between the two Governments and shall be made known to the people in ample time.

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The White Paper now before this Honourable House contains an outline of Government's proposals for the Constitution of the Independent Nation of Belize. There were many approaches available to Government. Government could have awaited proposals from the people and used those to form the basis of the Constitution without any guidance from Government. This, however, would not have been the most helpful approach and would have been tantamount to the abdication of Government's responsibility and duty to lead the people. Government, therefore, elected to put forward its views to the people.

The Constitution of Belize is a Constitution for all the people of Belize. If it is to work effectively, it must win as wide acceptance as possible. It is, therefore, the hope of Government that the people of Belize will feel totally free to comment on these proposals and to add their own views. I am sure that all responsible citizens, groups and organizations will recognise the importance of this document and make every effort to come forward with their own views. I propose later on in this Sitting to move a motion to create a machinery to make this possible.

Mr Speaker, during the last seventeen years we have worked a difficult Constitution which was never intended to last so long. That Constitution gave more responsibility than authority to the people's Government. The unusually long period between self-government and independence has familiarised us with a Parliamentary System of Government which we have learned to use. Government has, therefore, selected the Monarchical System of Government as the initial constitutional move on attaining independence. The future may justify alterations when and where the circumstances warrant.

Government's proposals are based on the principle of retaining those institutions which have served us well and re-designing those which have not. They also take into account those changes necessary to give full sovereignty. Thus, we propose that there should be no fundamental change in the Legislature the Judiciary and the Financial system. For example, some areas of Executive authority have been re-designed and provisions are made to protect the rights of the Public Service in the context of independence.

The document before you, Honourable Members, reflects Government's overriding commitment to the principles of social justice, human rights and the preservation of fundamental freedoms. It reflects our faith in a democratic society in which the government is freely elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage. It reinforces our view that people and institutions remain free only when freedom is founded upon the respect for moral and spiritual values and upon the rule of law. It fulfills our commitment to the preservation of the right of the individual to the ownership of private property.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is a commitment of the New and Progressive Belizean Revolution to lead Belize to a safe and secure independence with all our territory intact. The presentation of Government's proposals for a Constitution for independence is another step in our fulfilment of this commitment.

(a p p l a u s e)

/INTRODUCTION.....

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

1. Towns Property Tax (Amendment) Bill, 1981

HON. E. BRICEÑO (Minister of Local Government and Social Security): Mr Speaker, I rise to introduce a Bill for an Ordinance to amend the Towns Property Tax Ordinance No. 5 of 1960, which seeks to change the date of valuation roll and to change the due date for the payment of property taxes to coincide with the beginning of the new financial year, that is, April 1st.

Bill read a First Time and ordered to be printed.

MR SPEAKER: This Bill is referred to the Health, Education and Welfare Committee for examination, consideration and report.

2. Local Government (District Boards)(Amendment) Bill, 1981

HON. E. BRICEÑO (Minister of Local Government and Social Security): Mr Speaker, I rise to introduce a Bill for an Ordinance to amend the Local Government (District Boards) Ordinance, Chapter 136 of the Laws of Belize, to provide for the dissolution of the Monkey River Town Board and for the vesting in the Crown of the property which belong to that Town Board at the time of its dissolution.

It is proposed that the dissolution of the Board take effect from December 1, 1981, immediately after the current term of the Board ends.

The proposal to dissolve the township of Monkey River was made only after long and careful consideration of the condition that has prevailed in that Town for the past decade or so; for example, the population in that town, according to the census figures in 1970 was a total of 277 persons; in 1980, the total population was 191 persons. Now, let us compare the population figures of Monkey River with some of the villages in the area; for example, Mango Creek and Independence in 1970 had a population of 827, and a total of 1,474 in 1980; Seine Bight, 500 in 1970 and in 1980 - 465; Placencia - 290 in 1970 and in 1980 - 334; San Antonio, in 1970, had 1,057 and in 1980, showed a population growth of 1,087.

The level of economic activity is practically nil, and has been so for the past several years, and there has been continuous migration to other localities where there has been significant increase in economic activity - these places have been so over the years; for example, Mango Creek and Independence.

Some of the main sources of revenue in any town are Property Taxes, Trade and Liquor Licence. Unfortunately, in the case of Monkey River Town, in 1980, the following revenues were collected: Property Taxes, \$285.40; Trade Licence, \$60.00; Liquor Licence, \$150.00; they also collected fees for the supply of electricity, \$614.00 and Cemetery Fees, \$2.00, giving total Revenue collected, \$1,111.40.

The level of Property Tax collected by the Board is low because as shown in the Valuation Roll, there are only 132 rateable properties in the Town and more than 50% are vacant lots.

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The total collectable revenue on these properties is only \$373.60. Against the total revenue collected - \$1,111.40 - the Board incurred expenditures of some \$7,853.00.

All information available therefore, shows that Monkey River has, unfortunately, been dying as a Town. We realize, however, that it is still home for a number of Belizeans, and these people can be assured that the decision to dissolve the Township most certainly does not mean that they will be forgotten by this Government, for the Government has a commitment to all Belizeans wherever they may live, irrespective of how small or isolated the community.

Mr Speaker, I would just like to briefly trace the history of Monkey River, for apart from it being simply a matter of interest, it will also show it was a fair-sized town, and indeed was declared a Township before a number of other towns within the country which has long surpassed it in progress and development.

Monkey River settlement was declared a Town on 8 August 1891, and must have been a settlement of some size because Punta Gorda and Stann Creek - now Dangriga - were not declared Towns until 1895; Cayo and Benque Viejo were not declared Towns until 1904.

In 1892, Monkey River had two schools with a total enrollment of 116 children; this would have placed the total population at about 500 persons. In 1900 the school enrollment was 97.

In 1911, the census showed that Monkey River Town and the people along the river and branches numbered 771. The census of 1921 showed a population figure of 424.

There are a number of well-known and respected Belizeans who lived in Monkey River at various times. For example, there was Belizean Historian, E.O. Winzerling, who wrote "The Beginnings of British Honduras" and "Aspects of Maya Culture"; there was Canon Percy B. Simpson and Canon J.L. Blackett.

It appears that the first set-back to the dwellers of Monkey River Town was the Panama or Sigatoka Disease which destroyed banana plantations in the Stann Creek Valley in 1910 and 1920.

It is interesting to note that as far back as 1939, recommendations were made that Monkey River Township should either be dissolved or reconstructed due to very unfavourable conditions there.

Mr Speaker, I felt it necessary to go into this detail to show that there is little alternative but for the Government to reluctantly propose that the Township of Monkey River be dissolved. I would also like to repeat that the dissolution of the Board will not take effect until December 1, 1981 immediately after the current term of the Board ends.

(a p p l a u s e)

Bill read a First Time and ordered to be printed.

MR SPEAKER: This Bill is referred to the Health, Education and Welfare Committee for examination, consideration and report.

/ACTION.....

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OR SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

HON. G. PRICE (Premier and Minister of Finance):
Mr Speaker, I move that at its rising today, the House adjourns to a date to be fixed by the Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Question is that the House at its rising today, adjourns to a date to be fixed by the Speaker.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

A. Government Business

II MOTIONS

1. Loan to the Government of Belize - Caribbean Development Bank

HON. G. PRICE (Premier and Minister of Finance) : I move -

WHEREAS under the provisions of Section 3 of the Loans (Caribbean Development Bank) Ordinance, 1971 (No. 26 of 1971) the Government may, in such manner and on such terms and subject to such conditions as may be agreed between the Government and the Bank from time to time borrow such sums as may be required by the Government;

AND WHEREAS the Caribbean Development Bank has now agreed to lend the additional sum of U.S. \$5,000,000 (United States dollars five million) to the Government for the purpose of financing the expansion programme of the Belize Electricity system in the Belize City/Ladyville area;

BE IT RESOLVED that this House approves a loan of US\$2,500,000 from the Bank's Special Funds Resources and U.S.\$2,500,000 from the Bank's Ordinary Capital Resources to the Government for the purpose stated above on Caribbean Development Bank's standard terms and conditions and on the terms and conditions set out in the Motion.

HON. C. THOMPSON (Mesopotamia) : I rise to make some comments in respect of this Motion; this Motion which requests this House to, this morning, approve a loan of some ten million Belizean dollars for an expansion programme by the Belize Electricity Board.

Mr Speaker, before I go into the details of this Motion, I would like to state here that the resolution before us today tells us absolutely nothing in respect to the exact expansion project Government has in mind. This House is requested to approve a loan of ten million dollars and this House does not know the conditions made between this Government and the Caribbean Development Bank. What offers, what adjustments, what arrangements were made to have this loan; this House is very ignorant of that fact.

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In the Committee stage, I requested the Chairman of the Committee to submit to Members of this House the terms and conditions of the loan. All efforts were used to inform me and convince me that a thing of that nature is non-existent. I was told that this document is the terms and conditions of the loan - so I am supposed to be fool-fool; I no know betta. The Minister of Lands, supported by the Deputy Minister of Works, supported by the Clerk of this House, attempted to tell me that there is no condition apart from a standard normal condition for this particular loan. I asked that it be submitted or given to me before I come here today. I haven't seen it yet. But, Mr Speaker, I will read to you some sections of that non-existent terms and conditions, and I will start off with the first section. On page 53 Section 2, it says here "The Caribbean Development Bank shall receive evidence acceptable to the Caribbean Development Bank that the Government of Belize has agreed with the Belize Electricity Board to convert the long-term debt of 7.6 million dollars to a grant". In other words, to get that loan of ten million Belizean dollars, this Government has decided to throw away 7.6 million dollars that the tax payers pay every day; they are throwing away 7.6 million dollars, writing off, in order to get a loan of ten million dollars. That is in the terms and conditions of the loan which is non-existent. The tax payers, Mr Speaker, will feel a pressure of paying for money which Government could have collected from the Electricity Board. The tax payers will now be burdened with 7.6 million dollars more on what they are being burdened with now in order to get a loan of ten million dollars.

I go further to read from that non-existent terms and conditions, page 54 Part III says "without prejudice to the obligation under the Ordinance except as Caribbean Development Bank may otherwise agree, the Belize Electricity Board shall prescribe adequate charges for the supply of electricity and the provisions of associate services in order to enable the Belize Electricity Board to obtain a yield on the Board's rate-base as revalued by the Consultants referred to in previous chapters above and as revalued annually thereafter by the Board in a manner acceptable to the Government of Belize, an annual return of such level as to yield a net internal generation of funds sufficient to accumulate annually". What it is saying here, Mr Speaker, between 1981 and 1984, Government has agreed that the Belize Electricity Board will increase its rate to the public. Those who cannot pay their light bill now, will be paying more light bill with an increase of 6, 7 and 8%, respectively, between now and 1984, which means that by 1984, those who are paying high light bills now will be paying 21% more; but they do not want the terms and conditions of the agreement revealed so they kept it back and refused to have Members of the Opposition Party or myself as a Member of the Committee to know what I happen to know about it. This is the type of Government we are dealing with.

I go further. It says here on page 60 of the non-existent terms and conditions of the agreement, Mr Minister of Lands, Part 18 "The Government of Belize shall undertake not to prevent the Belize Electricity Board from prescribing adequate charges." In other words, - I don't have the document here, I read it one day, a little blue book called "The P.U.P. Manifesto for 1979", but in that book it says that the P.U.P. party policy is price control, and here they are agreeing to tie their hands, close their eyes, turn their backs to the Belize Electricity Board. And the Belize Electricity Board can raise the rates as high as possible and Government is bound by this agreement not to control it. I no understand that. The policy of the Government, Mr Speaker, is price control but they have agreed to break their policy in order to get a ten million dollar loan and they will allow the Belize Electricity Board to increase

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their rates as they see fit. I can't trust this Government. They have a policy and they agree to break this policy. When they say we will have military defence, we won't have any. That's what they tell us. This tells me that the Board is in a very, very serious position, technical and administrative mis-management. Right now in Belize City, they have black-out. Last night I wanted to prepare my notes for this morning and I did it with lamp because there was no light; but you know what is happening? I'm going to read to the Speaker about the condition of the Belize Electricity Board. The balance sheet for the Board at the end of September 1980 indicates that the Board is in a precarious financial position with a net deficit of 5 million dollars, long-term deficit of 19.2 million dollars and only a net asset of 15.9 million dollars. However, the Government of Belize has indicated that the 7 million dollars in the long-term debt will be written off. So what we are talking about today, apart from this 5 million U.S. dollars resolution, we are discussing 37 million dollars, Mr Speaker, not 5 million, because in the terms and conditions of the loan also which is non-existent, it tells us that this project costs 29 million dollars which means Government is borrowing 10 million; they will find the other 19 million to make the 29 because that's half the project and they are writing off 7 million dollars, plus the interest of 1.2 million dollars. So, we are talking, today, about 37 million dollars and the people have to pay for this and the poor unfortunate people will be paying more light bill because of 37 million dollars. Government is writing off, throwing away, 7.6 million dollars, increasing the cost of this project by 19 million. Mr Speaker, this is the type of thing I can't deal with. I no like people come to me and tell me do this and no tell me why. That's the reason I was so strong in the Ways and Means Committee, Mr Speaker, when I told them I know about the terms and conditions and I want to see it; but I was told it is non-existent because they had said if there's such a thing, I'll let you have it before you come to the House today, and I haven't seen it yet, but yet I'm able, today, to read into the records of this House, sections of that agreement, but it's non-existent. I don't like to be taken for a fool. Explain to me what I'm involved in, Mr Speaker, and I will deal with it.

So, if I may close off, Mr Speaker. What I would like to say is, the tax payers, today, will be burdened with 37 million dollars, 7 million thrown away - 8 million rather, because 1.2 million dollars interest is a lot, 8.2 million dollars thrown away and the remainder will be burdened and I do not have any guarantee that the Belize Electricity Board will come any better than they did the last time.

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON (Albert): Mr Speaker, the Government has a law which states that the only legal currency in this country is the Belizean dollar; therefore, one would expect that whenever the Government talks about money, it's in terms of the Belizean dollar; but it is interesting to note that in this resolution, the Government is asking this House to approve a loan of United States 5 million dollars. This United States currency is an illegal currency in this country. It seems, Mr Speaker, that certain Members of the Government need to be enlightened about their own laws. It seems that they do not know that it is illegal for anybody to have United States currency or any foreign currency unless in other words, if you come from the airport with your United States dollars you are supposed to proceed to the nearest counter and hand it in exchange for Belize dollars because Belize dollars is the only legal currency

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in this country according to their own law. So we have to ask why is it that they can quote to us United States dollars. Is it because it sounds smaller? Is it because when the public hear 5 million dollars, they say, oh well, it's only 5 million dollars additional loan that the Electricity Board will be getting, when every day hundreds of families in Belize City have to be existing in black-outs and, therefore, will be asking why is it that they have to be pushing out more money for such poor services, and so they don't want the public to hear the terms '10 million dollars'; that it is 10 million additional dollars they are borrowing, and as our Honourable Colleague has informed us, Mr Speaker, the total indebtedness of the Electricity Board is some 30-odd million dollars. This is the kind of things that this country has to put up with. We see here where our electricity rates are going up at the same time our taxes are being used to wipe out Electricity Board loans, and when the Opposition in this House at the beginning of last year pointed out that the Opposition of this House should be represented on the Electricity Board, that right was denied to the Opposition. In other words, they kept this exclusive club to themselves and you can see the reason now why it was kept to themselves so that they can hide from the people valued information which the people ought to have, and they feel that if the Opposition know about these facts, it will reach the people. But, Mr Speaker, there should be a full-fledge debate in this House on the Electricity Board because during the past few years every six months or so, a Motion comes to this House requesting additional loan for the Electricity Board and not one cent of those loans, or maybe I should amend that and say that the Electricity Board according to the Estimates, pay back something like ten dollars a year on the million which the Government borrow and lend to them. Therefore, Mr Speaker, the public has a right to a full debate, digging up all the facts. And we want all those documents, those hidden documents subpoena and brought before committees of this House so they can be thoroughly investigated because it seems that we are pouring money into a bottomless hole and the more money we pour in the more black-outs we get and the more black-outs we get the higher the rates go up. This is the story of Electricity Board and a stop has to be put to it.

The Opposition cannot stop this Motion from being passed today because they control the majority, therefore 10 million more will be poured into that hole. But let them take note that the Opposition intends to take this matter to the people and they better come to the people with all the facts because no black-outs will save them. They will not be able to hide the facts from the people with black-outs. People want to know the truth about the Electricity Board, where all those money are going to, how they are being spent. The Mayor is a P.U.P. Mayor. Thank God we had a brief period when the U.D.P. Mayor in Belize City was able to serve on the Electricity Board and find out these facts, otherwise even what the Honourable Member read to the House today would have been hidden from the people.

(interruptions)

MR SPEAKER: I would like to remind the Honourable Members that it is improper to be conducting conversation across the House. If a Member from the Government side makes a remark and it's a casual remark or interjection it must be ignored. It must not be answered by the speaker who's making an address to the House. I'm also remarking to the Honourable Member for the Albert that sometimes he repeats the argument which has already been put forward by the Member for Mesopotamia and I wish you would refrain from so doing.

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I merely repeat for emphasis some of those things which need to be driven

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home; but that is all I had to say on the matter, Mr Speaker. Thank you very much.

HON. C. WAGNER (Toledo South): Mr Speaker, I know that the Honourable Member in charge of the Electricity Board wanted to get up and close this debate as quickly as possible, but it is right to speak on these different Motions. So, Mr Speaker, I would like to add my little bit and hope that I do not tread too hard on some toes. But the point is that we are talking about 10 million Belizean dollars or 5 million U.S. dollars, and that is a substantial amount of money and naturally should engage a substantial amount of interest from both sides.

Mr Speaker, some years ago, not too very long when I first got into this House I note that the Electricity Board was under the Chairmanship of the present Chairman and at that time there was a debt of approximately a million dollars. Now, I thought that there was a bigger debt at the time so I placed a question to the Minister for an oral reply and the reply was that it was only a million so why worry about it, that's peanuts. Mr Speaker, that was a million dollars and at that time a million dollars was something like more or less about 5 million today, but it was peanuts to him and I thought that he would have just dealt with that loan like we would deal with a peanut - eat the kernel and throw the shell away. But that peanut has grown into a great big farm of peanuts which, today, is amounting according to the previous speakers to some 30-odd million dollars. Now, I don't know if the 30-odd million is correct, but what I do know is correct is that the outstanding debt of the Electricity Board is many times more than the one million dollars. It seems to me, Mr Speaker, that the Electricity Board is a business and the business is failing. It's not operating prosperously. Now, any good businessman or company when they note that a business is failing, that it's going deeper and deeper into debt, take different measures to straighten out the situation. Electricity and power supply is very vital for any society. Belize cannot live without it so it is what we'd call a necessary monopoly by the Government through the Electricity Board. But if this business is failing for so many years, constantly going deeper and deeper into debt then, obviously, something has to be done about the management of the business or the Board.

We have the Chairman who has been there for a substantial amount of years and who has tried many different ways to improve the situation, but all to no avail. Previous speakers said the more money you pour into the Board the more inefficiency you get, the more black-outs, and more lack of power. This harms the country because as we know most of the industrial business is done in the Belize City area. I heard on the Radio this morning that parts of the city and, I think, even as far as Ladyville area will be out of electricity. What happens to the factories? Will they shut down; productivity curtailed because of these shut-downs? I think something has to be done and something drastic and I mean from the top down. Something has to be done. And I think it's Government's responsibility to really seek out where the cause or failure lies and so remedy the situation. But it is not safe nor is it reasonable to expect the Belizean population to go on paying greater and greater debts for a business that is constantly failing. It is not correct. It is not reasonable. So, I implore Government or the Cabinet to look into the situation. Make an inquiry. And we need a new Chairman, or we need new management. Somewhere or the other, replace them because what we need is better service.

Thank you very much.

/HON LOUIS S. SYLVESTRE...

HON. LOUIS S. SYLVESTRE (Minister of Energy and Communications): I have been hearing conjectures from over the other side this morning, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I don't know of any hidden document. I don't know who is hiding any document. All the documents are practically public documents of the loan between the Government of Belize and the Caribbean Development Bank on behalf of the Belize Electricity Board or any other agencies that the Government obtains loans for, for expansion and development.

The Belize Electricity Board has had loans from way back in the 50's changing from DC current to AC current. I presume the Board didn't have any money of that kind so the loan came from the Government of Belize to help the Electricity Board to turn from DC current to AC current under which we are operating today. It's a form of sixty cycle which is used throughout the Hemisphere. The district towns from Corozal all the way down to Punta Gorda had a little light plant which was run by the Town Boards probably from six until nine in the night. There was no twenty-four hour electricity.

(interruptions)

Yes, but it is history. So that's where it came from because money was spent at that time and so the Government had to appropriate funds. If the U.D.P. was in at that time they would not look to borrow any money to increase the hours of electricity for the Districts; they would have left them right there from five to nine and they would be right now operating five to nine.

HON. T. ARANDA: Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member is engaging in conjectures. We have never had a chance for that, so he can't presume that either.

HON. LOUIS S. SYLVESTRE: I have been hearing conjectures from over the other side this morning, Mr Speaker.

So, the Government over those period of time have had to obtain loans on behalf of the Electricity Board to expand the electricity system throughout this country, not only in Belize City, but throughout the country so that the people of the districts and Belize City could get electricity twenty-four hours a day and some villages because it's now expanded out of some towns into the rural villages.

Now the population has increased in this country. What industry was in the 50's, the early 60's, is not what it is today in the 80's or the latter part of the 70's going into the 80's; and in the 80's it's going to be more. There is more demand for electricity as there has never been before. Where do you stay? Do you stay put right here and never move forward and everything breaks down, or do you go forward? And the only way you can go forward with an under-developed country like Belize that doesn't have the resources, the cash resources at your fingertip, is to apply for loan; and the Caribbean Development Bank

MR SPEAKER: The gallery will refrain from applauding the speakers in the course of their speeches and from making any noise whatsoever while the speeches are being made by the Honourable Member on the Floor.

/HON. LOUIS S. SYLVESTRE....

HON. LOUIS S. SYLVESTRE: And, Mr Speaker, the Caribbean Development is a Bank which is set up by the industrialized nations of the world, the United States of America, West Germany, Japan, England, and they have pumped money into Venezuela and they have pumped money into the Caribbean Development Bank with the sole purpose to help under-developed countries especially in the fields of electricity and agriculture, and they emphasize electricity because of the world situation and the price of fuel that has gone up - skyrocket; that affected not only the under-developed countries but the industrialized countries, as well, by the increase of the fuel that has gone up. Every other item that is produced in those countries have gone up, the spare parts have gone up. So, Mr Speaker, you don't only have to pay the high cost of fuel, lube, you also have to pay the high cost of spare parts, shipment. We don't manufacture it so we have to get it from England or wherever it is; the high cost of shipment, the freight. And when all these costs are taken up, plus the increase of the workers, of the organization, their increase which is required from them to get a better way of living; when you take all those up together and when you add it up, that's a lot of money involved there. But we cannot afford to stand still. If we had stood still years ago, the entire situation would have collapsed. We are constantly moving. This loan, today, is to update, renew the lines, the transmission lines from Ladyville to Belize City. This is being done, the whole thing was done by a consultant firm, Merz and Macmillan, who is accepted by the Bank, accepted by this Government, and they have come up with the engineering and the suggestions that should be done. Their plan is to move all the generating sets out to Ladyville, whatever new development is out at Ladyville. In the case of a hurricane where in Belize City we suffer from high tidal waves, that this will not hamper the generating sets as it has done in the past with the ones in Belize City, the downtown plant. This also calls for the expansion of the line, the extension of the line from the Ladyville power station to Doublerun where Belize City is now fed by the water supply there. We have individual generating sets but that can't continue for too long. This is also to provide whatever generating capacities at Ladyville can be transmitted down into Belize City so that, I repeat, that the downtown power station will no longer come into operation.

Mr Speaker, we have three generating sets, well five, three of them are over twenty-five years old, two cannot be worked any more - over twenty years old - they need to go into the museum. There's another generating set there. I'm telling you this, Mr Speaker, to let you know that we have not been keeping still; we have got to go on and on or we'll get ourselves into very serious problems. There are generating sets there that the company has informed the Electricity Board that they have stopped making parts for it from 1978. Our engineers have asked them for the drawings of that plant to see if we can get some other company around throughout this Hemisphere that might be able to make the parts, but the company is not making any more parts for that generating set. That set is about fifteen years old. There's another set which is sixteen years old in the downtown plant. The demand for electricity, the Government or the Board has a lot of problem to catch up with it, to match it. The fellows that work there, that maintain the sets, that look after it, that run it, they are limited. They are trying to do their best, but if those sets, like some people would like to see, that you run the set until they are broken, millions of dollars worth of generating sets. You can't do that. Those sets have got to run up to a certain amount of hours and then they have got to be taken off and repairs and maintenance have got to be done on those sets. So it's either you suffer probably a week of black-outs while the guys are working on the

/sets.....

sets or you suffer it longer. You all would break up the sets. You'd run it and run it till you break it up.

Mr Speaker, the Government right now because of the high demand for electricity especially in the districts of Corozal and Orange Walk which we can see have been picking up over the period of years are now embarking on a vast expansion programme, building of new generating houses and the installation of new generating sets, so that the expansion programme can go on farther out to light the villages. This has been the policy of the Peoples United Party. There are two generating sets which are being installed in Dangriga at the present moment. That is to help in the expansion programme and updating of the lines in Dangriga so that the people can get a better source of electricity, but if we do not have sufficient generating sets, again, I repeat, we cannot stand still because if we do not have sufficient generating sets, additional capacity, then anywhere you go you'll be in trouble because you cannot take one engine down so that the mechanics and the electrical engineers can really do justice to that generating plant and if you cannot do justice to that generating plant then the set will either break, be destroyed then you'll be throwing away money that you say is being thrown away. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

HON. V.H. COURTENAY (Minister of State): If I may for just a few minutes, Mr Speaker, join this great debate on the management of the Belize Electricity Board, which doesn't seem to be contemplated by the resolution at all. This is a totally financial Motion, in the course of which we went into a very expensive dissertation on the management of the Electricity Board. Nevertheless, I would like first of all to begin by correcting the impression that the Government had something to hide and, therefore, it sought to hide it by hiding under the currency of the United States of America, a currency which by the Government of Belize, has been declared illegal. It is a fantastic proposition that this Government can declare the currency of another country, illegal. We most certainly cannot. What we do have the authority to do is to say what is legal tender in our country; in other words, the currency in which, in Belize, trade must take place between persons. This being a loan from an international organization, it is not surprising that we use international conversion currency.

(a p p l a u s e)

Mr Speaker, I would also like to draw a distinction between what is before us and what is the business and the problem of this House where this Motion is concerned. As I understand the position, we are being asked to approve a loan to the Government of Belize of five million dollars in the currency of the United States for an expansion programme of the Belize Electricity Board. That, as I understand it, is a very simple issue for the Members of this House. We either want an expansion of the services of the Belize Electricity Board or we don't want it. If we want it, we have to get the financing for it; if we do not want it, then we need not make this loan. That is the choice for Members of this House. But I cannot escape making a comment about a former member of the Belize Electricity Board who demonstrated his cleverness by reading portions of documents which came into his possession while he was holding office of Acting Mayor, and as that, a member of the Belize Electricity Board.

(interruptions)

/May.....

May I have some protection here, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Please allow the Member to speak.

HON. V.H. COURTENAY: What we must understand is that in negotiating this loan, the Government of Belize negotiated the loan on the terms and conditions contained in this paper. If on the other hand, the Caribbean Development Bank, in its discussions with the Belize Electricity Board into which it is prepared to invest money, has had negotiations for the rationalization and streamlining of the management of the Board, then let us not confuse those discussions with the negotiations of the Government for this loan.

Finally, Mr Speaker, the Caribbean Development Bank is a Bank and, like all other banks, it makes its loan on the basis of a viability criteria. Is the project into which it is putting its money capable of generating income for the purposes of repaying the loan. Every banker, including the Caribbean Development Bank, uses that criteria in making a loan. Therefore, all these big statements about the financial condition of the Belize Electricity Board seem not to have impressed the technicians of the Caribbean Development Bank, since they have considered this scheme to be a viable scheme - that the expansion scheme of the Belize Electricity Board is a scheme which will be able to repay the principal and the interest of a ten million Belize dollars loan.

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON: I would like him to inform this House whether this loan is to the Electricity Board or to the Government of Belize.

HON. V.H. COURTENAY: Mr Speaker, as I was saying before I was so crassly interrupted, because the Honourable Member has the Motion before him and the Motion says who the loan is to, so you don't have to ask me.

(interruptions)

MR SPEAKER: Order!

HON. V.H. COURTENAY: Finally, Mr Speaker, I would wish to make this point, that one of the pre-conditions of the Caribbean Development Bank finalizing negotiations with the Government of Belize, dotting the i's and crossing the t's of a contract which relates to a Bank, is that the Legislature should approve the general terms and conditions of the loan, otherwise the Caribbean Development Bank, out of experience with, I believe, all other territories, has found that it spends months negotiating a loan only to come to the Legislature and find that it has not got the authority. So, that one of the pre-conditions of the finalization of negotiation, is that the approval of the National Assembly should be secured. This is what we are asked to do today. And it is when that has taken place and the Caribbean Development Bank is satisfied that the Legislature has approved the Government negotiating such a loan, that the terms and conditions are fully finalized and the agreement is executed. So that it is not a question that the Government of Belize has ten million dollars that it is going to throw away. Not a cent has been paid, and the finalization of the negotiations have not taken place. Thank you very much.

/MR SPEAKER.....

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Question is -
 Be it resolved that this House approves a loan of US\$2,500,000
 from the Bank's Special Funds Resources and US\$2,500,000 from
 the Bank's Ordinary Capital Resources to the Government for
 the purpose stated above on Caribbean Development Bank's
 standard terms and conditions and on the terms and conditions
 stated in the Motion.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against,
 kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

2. White Paper on the Proposed Terms of a
 Constitution for the Independent Belize

HON. G. PRICE (Premier and Minister of Finance): I move:

NOTING the Government White Paper on the
 Proposed Terms of a Constitution for the Independent
 Belize laid on the Table of this Honourable House today;

RECOGNIZING the importance of so basic and
 fundamental a document to the lives of all Belizeans
 and the society in which they live;

INTENDING that the National Assembly shall offer
 full opportunity for all Belizeans freely to express
 their wishes upon the Constitutional proposals of the
 Government;

DECLARES that the White Paper on the Proposed
 Terms of a Constitution for the Independent Belize
 shall be referred to a Joint Select Committee com-
 prising six members of the House of Representatives
 and three members of the Senate to be appointed in
 accordance with the Standing Orders by the Honourable
 Speaker and the Honourable President, respectively,
 for its consideration, examination and report;

AND DIRECTS the Joint Select Committee to
 canvass the opinions of the Belizean people before
 presenting its final report to the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, in the statement, there was reference to
 the machinery for consulting the people. The machinery is this
 Select Committee. It is the democratic process at work.
 We envisage that this Select Committee will go out to the people,
 will hear their views and bring back a report to the National
 Assembly at some future date. We can only appeal and request
 the people of Belize to work the democratic process and to
 respond to this cause.

(a p p l a u s e)

HON. T. ARANDA (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Speaker,
 I rise to propose an amendment to the White Paper on the
 Proposed Terms of a Constitution for an Independent Belize Motion.

I propose the deletion of paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of the
 original and the modification of paragraph 4 of the original.
 The amendment, therefore, would read as follows:-

Noting that some significant questions need
 to be dealt with prior to raising the question of

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independence for Belize;

Recognising that Britain must solve her dispute with Guatemala peacefully before raising the question of independence for Belize;

Recognising further that the people of Belize be given an opportunity to express their wish through an impartially organized and impartially supervised referendum on the question of independence for Belize;

Seeing that a reform whereby the electoral system and Radio Belize be controlled by a fair and impartial body;

Knowing that Belize should be prepared for a meaningful participation in her own defence by land, sea and air;

Knowing further that Belize be assisted in establishing adequate defence arrangement for post-independent Belize;

Declares that the above-mentioned priorities be referred to a Joint Select Committee, comprising six Members of the House of Representatives and three Members of the Senate to be appointed after an agreement between the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition to achieve a representation of the Joint Select Committee proportional to the support each Party showed in the last General Elections;

And further declares that the Joint Select Committee proceed thereafter to consider the White Paper on the constitution for the Independent Belize;

And directs the Joint Select Committee to canvass the opinions of the Belizean people before presenting its final report to the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, a paper similar to this modification that we..

HON. V.H. COURTENAY: Mr Speaker.....

MR SPEAKER: Is it a point of order?

HON. V.H. COURTENAY: It's not a point of order. This seems to be a totally new Motion, the text of which Members have not had the benefit of seeing. I wondered whether it would be appropriate to suspend the Sitting of the House for five minutes when Members could get copies of this new Motion. It is hardly an amendment, and I wondered whether that would not be appropriate.

MR SPEAKER: It's a reasonable request.

I call for the suspension of the Sitting for five minutes while Members are being given copies of the amendment. We'll resume in five minutes time.

Sitting suspended at 11:30 a.m.

Sitting resumed at 11:45 a.m.

/HON. T. ARANDA.....

HON. T. ARANDA: Amendments to the White Paper on the Proposed Terms of a Constitution for the Independent Belize Motion.

Noting that some significant questions need to be dealt with prior to raising the question of independence for Belize;

Recognising that Britain must solve her dispute with Guatemala peacefully before raising the question of independence for Belize;

Recognising further that the people of Belize be given an opportunity to express their wish through an impartially organised and impartially supervised referendum on the question of independence for Belize;

Seeing that a reform whereby the electoral system and Radio Belize be controlled by a fair and impartial body;

Knowing that Belize should be prepared for a meaningful participation in her own defence by land, sea and air;

Knowing further that Belize be assisted in establishing adequate defence arrangement for post-independent Belize;

Declares that the above-mentioned priorities be referred to a Joint Select Committee comprising six Members of the House of Representatives and three Members of the Senate to be appointed after an agreement between the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition to achieve a representation on the Joint Select Committee proportional to the support each Party showed in the last General Elections;

And further declares that the Joint Select Committee proceed thereafter to consider the White Paper on the constitution for the Independent Belize;

And directs the Joint Select Committee to canvass the opinions of the Belizean people before presenting its final report to the National Assembly.

I call attention to the corrected parts, Mr Speaker. In paragraph 2 where it says "And further declares that the Joint Select Committee proceed thereafter to consider the White Paper on the Constitution for the Independent Belize".

Mr Speaker, the content of that amendment has already been forwarded to the British Government, through Lord Carrington, and we invite the Government to a bi-partisan discussion searching for common grounds on these issues whereby we can, in fact, lay the grounds to move to a bi-partisan approach on the constitutional issue. The thing is that Belize is unnecessarily endangering itself and its own security by proceeding into independence or proceeding into preparation for independence without first solving the problem with Guatemala. Belize must not do that and she should never be forced into doing that. The issue of referendum is something that Belizeans should have.

The British Government has claimed all along that it's policy of decolonization respects the wishes of the dependent territory as far as the timing of constitutional changes in the constitutional status is concerned. And at the United Nations

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October 17, 1979, a British Representative, Sir Anthony Parsons, declared that Britain would not force constitutional changes and, certainly, not independence on any British dependency before that dependency seeks it. He went on to say that the guiding principles would be the respect of the wishes of the inhabitants of each territory. However, the behaviour of the Government of Belize and the Government of Britain in this issue has been one of complete and utter disregard of the wishes of the people of Belize. These two governments on their own without directly consulting the people of Belize are forcing constitutional changes and independence on the people of Belize. The British and the Belizean Government appeals to Resolution 1514 of the United Nations and in terms of explanation that explanation speaks of the wishes of the people of territories, but the Government of Belize appeals to this Resolution for the support of independence to Belize without at all getting the expressed wishes of the people of Belize upon which the appeal to that Resolution has validity and legality. Without the peoples wish any appeal to Resolution 1514 of the United Nations does not have the validity or the legality required of it. Furthermore, Mr Speaker, before the referendum can at any time take place there is a need for a reform in the electoral system of Belize - I mean for a control, sorry - for a control of the electoral system of Belize and there is a need for reform in the control of Radio Belize, because without an amendment or a reform in the control of these two systems, no election will have the result of what the people want it to be. The people of Belize must be provided with a fair and impartial control of the system and a fair and impartial control of Radio Belize because at this moment, up to now that is, the electoral system and Radio Belize are completely under the control of the People's United Party and used solely in the service of the People's United Party. What might be the best way to achieve a fair and impartial control of this system would have been a board or an organization or a body that is not at all political; but this doesn't exist in Belize. Therefore, a bi-partisan control of the electoral system and of Radio Belize is the only mechanism that we can see that affords or produces the fairness and the impartiality required of the system and the medium. And when I say bi-partisan, I mean that in the electoral system from the top right down to the bottom that the United Democratic Party and the People's United Party be equally, and I mean numerically equally; I don't mean proportionally; I mean equally represented on the Board. And the same thing goes for Radio Belize; an adequate time should be given to this reform to prove itself before a referendum takes place. Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Belize requires and needs to be able to meaningfully participate in its own defence. So far we have nothing from this side of Belize that has that meaningful participation.

We have, first of all, about 200 miles of seacoast. In that sea, in the bed of that sea and in the sea itself is a great amount of Belizean wealth. We need to patrol those seas. We need to defend that because that is not just the seas of Belize that is Belize. We have our sea and we have our fishes there; and one of the biggest exports of Belize is marine products. It is suspected that in the bed of that sea we have petroleum or other minerals which Belize needs to protect so that the wealth of Belize will not be pilfered from Belize but rather utilized as the people of Belize wish. We, therefore, need some kind of patrol, some kind of defence for those seas. We have the air space which we also need to patrol. And we have our border, that is, the land border which we need to patrol and, in conjunction with that, is the improvement of the Belize Defence Force to be able to defend Belize. Because, so far, the idea of the B.D.F. is a very good one, but the B.D.F. is not

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in a position to defend Belize as we would like it to.

The other thing is that Belize after independence be assisted in establishing adequate defence. When these are satisfied, Mr Speaker, we propose, therefore, that we proceed towards constitutional talks, jointly, between the People's United Party and the United Democratic Party and work on an inequitable constitution for the country and give ourselves enough time, both as Party members as well as Members of the House, the insignificant and the important sections of the country of Belize and the Belizean people as a whole, partaking and making input into the constitution that is to rule over the lives of the people of Belize and every other generation.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I must remark on the fact that we have come to the hour of interruption, normally. But I would like to have the wishes of the House whether we should continue with the debate.

HON. G. PRICE (Premier and Minister of Finance):
Mr Speaker, I would suggest we adjourn and continue the debate at two o'clock.

MR SPEAKER: Very well. The Session is now suspended until two o'clock in the afternoon.

Sitting suspended at 12:00 Noon.

Sitting resumed at 2:00 p.m.

HON. T. ARANDA (Leader of the Opposition): I have said what I had to say this morning, Mr Speaker, so I am finished.

Thank you.

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON (Albert): Mr Speaker, I rise first of all to second the amendment to the Motion and to say a few words on it.

Mr Speaker, this amendment, as Honourable Members will notice, seeks to meet the true aspirations and interests of the people of Belize in every respect.

First of all, there is a proposal that the membership of the Select Committee should comprise both sides of the House, both Parties in the House in proportion to the strength of the Parties in the country as indicated by the last General Elections. The original Motion had proposed that the representation in the Committee should be on the basis of the Standing Orders, that is, the balance of Parties in the House. Under that proposal, the Opposition would be given, as it were, token representation on the Committee - three Members out of the nine Members of the Committee. In other words, the Opposition is out-numbered in the proportion of three to one if the proposal in the original Motion is followed. But in such an important matter as this, the Opposition seeks to invoke the provisions of Standing Order 92 which permits the Leader of the House, who I believe is the Premier, and the Leader of the Opposition, with the permission of the Speaker, to come to an agreement concerning certain arrangements referred in the House, and the Speaker would then follow the agreement, so made, to the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition.

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In our opinion, this would give a more satisfactory and acceptable arrangement than merely to say that well we are going to have three to one and, therefore, you may have a small say....

MR SPEAKER: I have to correct you.

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSOON: Yes, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: It is not three to one; it is two to one.

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSOON: I am sorry. I am talking the overall membership of the Committee.....interruptions..... it's the overall membership of the Committee. Out of the nine Members of the House.....

MR SPEAKER: Permit me, Honourable Member, to point out that it will be composed of six to three, which is in the ratio of two to one.

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSOON: Very well, Mr Speaker.

Anyway, what it amounts to is that the proposal is that the Opposition will have one-third of the membership of the Committee and the other Party two-thirds of the membership. We feel that it should be more balanced, say maybe five to four; five for the ruling Party, four for the Opposition; the representation, as I explained, in the House.

Mr Speaker, the amendment then deals with the all important matters which concern this question of independence. Now, there are several things which touch on the question of independence. Most of them are matters which we, Belizeans, can arrange amongst ourselves. We may argue about them, but there are things which we can, without any harm to ourselves, arrange; such things as the symbols of the country; those are matters which we can and should arrange for ourselves. There are such things as the Constitution. There is no big deal concerning producing a Constitution. I suppose any of us with a good experience can sit down and in a few hours time knock up the Constitution. We, Belizeans, can produce that. But there are some things which are beyond the scope of us, Belizeans, to arrange solely by ourselves, and it's upon those matters that the Opposition seek priority before we go into any commitment on this question of independence.

What is proposed in the original Motion is to, as it were, give the people a Constitution to play around with - I have not gotten my copy of the White Paper yet. I am supposed to vote on the matter, but I have not gotten it yet. But from what the Premier has explained in his statement he made this morning, what the Government proposed is hardly any difference from what we have right now. He's criticized it. He said that the Constitution we have is backward and something to that effect, but it seems from what he explains, that in the proposed Independence Constitution there is hardly going to be any change. There is going to be a few adjustment in the Executive area, but, generally, everything will remain as it is. So that the people will be given something which I suspect may be passed to them to make them feel that they are participating in something which they are not really participating in because the things which really concern our independence are to be kept from them, it appears. For instance, who benefits by Belize's independence? This is the first question you must ask. It is

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It is said that Belize must get independence now, this year. Who benefits by that? Certainly not the Belizean people. Oh! the politicians may benefit a little because they will be able to swing around the world, travel around as Ambassadors and so on. They will have more power. But who really benefits? And it is quite true, Mr Speaker, that the party that really benefits is Great Britain. Great Britain has a dispute with Guatemala hanging around our neck; that dispute was created by negotiation between Great Britain and Guatemala one hundred and twenty years ago in 1859 behind the backs of Belizeans; our ancestors were not involved in those secret negotiations; Britain and Guatemala negotiated it. Out of that Treaty of 1859, a dispute has arisen between Guatemala and Great Britain. But our country is the subject of the dispute and because the dispute follows the land, whoever holds the land inherits the dispute. So it means that it is to the benefit of Great Britain to push Belize into Independence, to get rid of this dispute which She cannot settle, which She finds very expensive, which She finds very troublesome and which pins Her down to an obligation which She would like to get rid of. Moreover, by going along with independence for Belize this year, Great Britain is able to appear before the world as an enlightening country willing to give independence to a Colonial territory. But, Mr Speaker, we the Belizean people must make it clear that we know what independence really means. We must make it clear that we know that independence means more than a Flag and an Anthem and a Constitution. Independence really means the ability of a nation to survive, to protect its territory and to protect its people within that territory and even outside that territory. So when Great Britain is saying to the people of Belize, you are ready for independence, they are, in effect, saying you are ready to protect your territory and to protect your people within and without that territory. And we, Belizeans, because we are supposed to be so carried away by the mere word "independence" that we are supposed to be swept off our feet and grab for this shadow and let go the substance, and that is the importance. What is the substance that we now have? The substance that we now have is the obligation of Great Britain to defend this country. That obligation binds Great Britain, if this country is ever attacked, to defend it as though She is defending a part of England. We are being induced so voluntarily to release Great Britain from Her obligation in exchange for a promise, and not even a real promise. It could be truly said, in exchange for a promise of a promise because what is being hinted at us now, is that somehow or the other, once we have agreed to go along with independence, there is a hint, there is a sort of half promise that we may promise you, maybe a security guarantee, because no real promise has so far been made. The Members of the Opposition Party some weeks ago met with five Members of the Defence Committee of the two Parties in the House of Commons at the Airport Camp who visited here last December. What they were speaking about - and they are the people concerned with Defence in Parliament - and what they were speaking about was that after Belize becomes independent that maybe they can keep the British troops here for another two years after independence. And when we found out whether two years would be sufficient, their argument was, well do you think Guatemala will interfere with you after the United Nations vote that they should not do it? Now, Mr Speaker, we must be brave. How many times have United Nations voted that Russia should get out of Afganistan or that Israel should hand over certain territories that She conquered from the Arabs? Who pays any attention to any resolution of the United Nations?

So, I would say the first beneficiary of Belize's independence in 1981 will be Great Britain. This thing which hangs like a millstone around Britain's neck will be removed with

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one sweep, and if any disaster overtake the people of Belize, Great Britain would be the first one to say: they asked for it; they demanded it; they went to the international community; they went to the United Nations and demanded it, and we simply gave them what they asked for. Nothing will be said then of the fact that the people, themselves, were not consulted as to whether they wish to give up that obligation that Britain has in exchange for a promise which, if it is given, would be of short duration.

Then there is another beneficiary that I see, Mr Speaker, and that is Guatemala. Oh! Guatemala is making a little fuss now, we don't want you to go; we should not get independence until this matter is settled. But when you look real deep down, once you get independence, once the British troops go, what is to stop Guatemala from moving in and take any part of Belize, or all of it. Oh! I have no doubt that the Security Council will pass resolutions condemning Guatemala. They will order Her to get out immediately, but who will pay any attention to that. And after all, what obviously will be said is that better Guatemala have it than the communist have it. This has been done time and again with various countries. It happened in the case of East Timor, a little island off the coast of Indonesia where the people were induced to exercise their right to self-determination and independence. And what happened after they got their so-called independence? Indonesia sent in troops and seized East Timor; so they enjoyed one week of independence. And documents have now come to light, Mr Speaker, which reveal that there is a letter from the British Ambassador in Indonesia written to Her Majesty's Government in London in which the Ambassador said that it is accepted that East Timor is in no position to exercise the right to self-determination and independence, but that the situation cannot be allowed to remain as it is because this will induce the communist eventually taking over; so, Britain and Australia and America, may as well encourage East Timor to demand and exercise her right to self-determination and independence, and then when Indonesia "seize it" - to use the words of the Ambassador - we simply ride out the storm in the United Nations.

These documents were first to be published in a book in Australia and the Australian Government got a Court Injunction to stop it from being published in Australia. But one letter from these documents was published in the London News Statesman and what that one letter reveals, it points to the fact that when you are dealing with big powers, a little nation has to be very careful in dealing with big powers; big powers consider their interests, and they will encourage you to believe that they are looking after your interests. Well, if you fall for the bait then later on you will be the one that will be victim.

So, Mr Speaker, what the Opposition is saying, we must call on Great Britain to discharge her obligations to this country; not push off unless the things which we can do for ourselves, like our Constitution, and so on, and say well, o.k. this is it; but first of all, she must settle her dispute with Guatemala. It is her dispute, not ours.

Secondly, Great Britain must prepare Belize to participate in her own defence, and I don't mean a handful of B.D.F. soldiers. I have great respect for B.D.F. soldiers, and I think it is a good start, but it is only a start. As the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said, we have a long coast-line to protect; we have air space to protect. Now they may say, oh! this will cost a lot of money, but let us just remember that in two world wars when Great Britain was in jeopardy, battalions of soldiers from Belize were trained and sent to England and to other parts of the world to fight to preserve the Empire. So, when it suited Britain,

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in a matter of months, Belizean soldiers were trained, equipped and transported thousands of miles to help defend foreign soil. So we must not make them play around with a little handful of Belizean soldiers and pawn it up as the real thing; we must demand that she discharge her responsibility by helping us to enlist, train and equip a real Belizean fighting force, and if necessary, help us to maintain that force for a while after independence until we can get on our feet to do it ourselves.

Secondly, apart from the land forces, we must be able to defend our coast-line. Right now, there are fishing laws in this country which obliges all commercial fishermen to get a licence to fish. If a Belizean fisherman is caught in Belizean waters fishing without a licence he is subject to a heavy fine and the seizure of his boat and his fishing tackle, fishing gear. This law is intended to apply to all the fishermen, both Belizeans and foreigners, but the fact is that while this applies to Belizeans it cannot be used against the Guatemalan fishermen.

Some couple years ago I defended some fishermen who were caught in a Belizean boat fishing, in the Punta Gorda Court. They were charged with fishing illegally, and I went down there to defend them. One of the questions I asked the Magistrate, off the records: I said, "how come it is only Belizean fishermen and now and then Honduran fishermen the police are prosecuting?" I said, "don't the Guatemalans come across and fish too?" He said, "of course, but they come with guns, what can we do?" So, even now we cannot protect our fishing grounds from encroachment by the Guatemalans much less after independence. Why can't we protect it? We can't protect it because even now when Britain is supposed to defend us, we can't call upon the British Navy to come here and drive out Guatemalan fishermen. We should be able to do that ourselves. So, this calls for a coastguard fleet, at least, to maintain patrol of our coastline and be able to exercise some degree of policing of our waters. Now, when I begin to see a Belizean marine or sailor walking our streets, then I will be able to hold my head high and say, yes, Belize is getting ready for independence because we can protect our waters. When I begin to see a Belizean airman walking the streets of Belize in a Belizean uniform and know that he belongs to even a reconnaissance flying ship I could then say that Belize is able to play some small part in her own protection, her own defence; then we will begin to demonstrate that we really know what independence is all about. But to say that we go into independence and we will depend totally on somebody else's guns to protect our independence, then I say the world will laugh at us. Of course, they will say that sure you are entitled to independence, just like if any young man or a young lady go up to somebody and say, am I entitled to be married? And if you go and ask a thousand people they will say, of course, you have a right to be married. And if you go and ask a thousand people they will say, of course, you have a right to be married. But it is for you to decide whether you are entitled to be married at a particular time. You can't go rushing out and get married and then later on you go to those people and say you said that I had a right to be married, so now you have to maintain me and my wife and my family. So, Mr Speaker, I would say that those matters are matters which should be attended to first.

Then, we know, all of us in this country know that no Belizean fighting forces can undertake the entire defence of Belize. We know that. That will be something they call a peace-time force, to carry out peace-time duties. But this is a country that is in dispute. This is a country which is claimed. Even if the Guatemalans were to say tomorrow, look, we are going to drop that claim, we could not completely trust to that because another Guatemalan Government may repudiate what a government of Guatemala has done; and that claim to Belize is enshrined in the Guatemalan

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Constitution, and it can only be removed by a referendum of the Guatemalan people which is hardly likely to work. In other words, that provision in the Guatemalan Constitution that Belize is their territory and that every Government of Guatemala has an obligation to recover it, will probably remain in the Guatemalan Constitution to the end of this century and beyond. That's a fact of life we got to face. Therefore, even though we will have to demand that Britain assist Belize in training, equipping and maintaining its own fighting forces, we will have to seek an outside force, external arrangements, to stand by us, to come to our aid; and this has to be something that is substantial, worthwhile; and we believe that it is Great Britain's obligation to assist Belize to make those arrangements before independence. In other words, the Belizean people must be satisfied before independence that these arrangements are worthwhile and that we can rely on them before we entrust our country and our liberties and our very lives to independence.

So, it is in this connection that we call upon Britain to meet these three obligations first of all; and then after that, after we have had time to test out these arrangements, then we can go into independence. Nothing is absolutely sure in this world, but at least we will be able to satisfy ourselves, our children and generations to come that we have made reasonable arrangements for the protection of this country.

Now, Mr Speaker, when the Opposition speaks about a referendum, they are not just speaking about a referendum on whether Belizeans want independence or not; it is more than that; because, I believe, in fact I know that independence is enshrined in every Belizean heart. This is not something put there by any political party, this is put there by God. Just as the impulse within a man as he gets to adulthood to establish a family is there built in him, a man and a woman, this is built in, he comes packaged with this; so a people come packaged with this desire to be free and independent. So, it's not just that question that must be put to the people in the referendum. The question that has to be put to the people is this, are you prepared to go into independence now with the Guatemalan claim unsettled, with Belize not having any fighting forces of its own, at least to stand on its feet in minor matters of defence and to be able to contribute in a meaningful way - to use the words of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition - to contribute meaningfully; so that when, if any war comes and if Englishmen have to come here to defend our borders and our seas, there will be some Belizean faces there along with them shooting the guns in defence of their own homeland. And, lastly, are we prepared to go into independence with the present hints, suggestions, half-promises that if something happen to you we will come to your aid. Those are the things that the Opposition means when it talks about having a referendum. Put that issue to the Belizean people. If a referendum is held fairly, objectively, properly supervised, and the Belizean people decide we want to take the risk; we are prepared to run the risk of Britain taking her fighting forces from this country leaving us without even a sea defence, an air defence, or any adequate land defence with the dispute unsettled; if they are prepared to take that in a fair referendum to the Belizean people, then the Opposition will say that is the decision of the Belizean people. It is our country, it is our lives, it is our property, it is our children; then we must risk it because the people say so. But the Opposition cannot allow any one man to speak for all the people of this country, or any one Party. And people who will go abroad and ask United Nations if we can get independence this year and a hundred and thirty-nine nations speak, and want to claim that the one hundred and thirty-nine nations because they spoke that wipe out the right for the Belizean people to speak for themselves, the Opposition cannot tolerate that,

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because no country needs United Nations vote to get independence. If we were really ready for independence, we'd go into independence without any vote from the United Nations. We don't have to ask their permission; we don't have to ask their support, if we are really ready for it. So don't try to substitute that for the decision of the Belizean people on this important matter.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I want to end on this personal note. Attempts are made from time to time to create the impression that anybody in this country who wants to look, realistically, at the question of independence is a colonialist. You are not supposed to examine it at all. You are not supposed to ask what you are going into. You are not supposed to ask questions. If you do that, something is wrong with you.

Mr Speaker, I suffered imprisonment fighting against colonialism. Other persons when the crisis came for them, they were prepared to get into court, put their hand on the Bible and lie in order to escape from prison. I stood to my convictions in court and suffered imprisonment for it in the fight against colonialism. So, for those who, today, are making the biggest noise against colonialism, who drop the word of God in every occasion to impress people how holy they are over everybody else, they were prepared to get into court and lie on the Holy Bible and induce other people to lie because they were not prepared to suffer imprisonment in the fight against colonialism; I say those kind of persons are not qualified to commit me and my children and the people of this country and their children to lead them into a trap. They are not qualified to do that.

And so, Mr Speaker, we have to call a spade a spade from now on in this issue. And this is the reason for this amendment by the Opposition. We would have hoped that the ruling party would have come to the Opposition, invited the Opposition and sat down with us and tried to reach common grounds. But no, they want to swamp us with numbers - tokenism; pretend to be giving us a say, knowing very well that whatever they have there, whatever they want to do, we'd have no real say over it, but later on it can be said, 'oh, we gave them a say in the matter'. The Belizean people decide this. Let me tell them; neither them nor us are the whole Belizean people. In this matter, neither of the parties are completely entitled to speak for the Belizean people; both of them together are not completely entitled to speak for the Belizean people. The people must interruptions normally; if it was a normal situation, yes; we'll have no objection to the Government proposing that we are going into independence and the Opposition would then be concerned with what we are going to have in the Constitution and so on and so on. We'd argue that out, trying to get the best arrangement we can, and lead our people into independence as unitedly as possible. But when it comes to this question where the future of this country is in jeopardy; where Great Britain, the Belizean Government, everybody knows very well that Belize cannot maintain its independence; therefore, we have to suspect that there are some ulterior motives in trying to push us off into independence without a proper consideration of the rights and interests of the Belizean people. And that, Mr Speaker, is the issue in this matter.

Thank you very much.

(a p p l a u s e)

/HON. F.J. MARIN.....

HON. F.J. MARIN (Minister of Natural Resources):
 I rise to reject and condemn the amendment proposed by the other side of this Honourable House. That amendment is nothing less but a betrayal of the Belizean people.

(a p p l a u s e)

This amendment to the Motion presented this morning is a mechanism to bring into this Honourable House arguments that I read in the foreign press, said from time to time by Guatemalan Generals, by Guatemalan Foreign Ministers and by Guatemalan Presidents. It is a trap so conceived to create fear in the Belizean people so as to confuse and discourage them from taking the ultimate step to independence and nationhood and liberation. Such a thing I will not support. That is why I rise to condemn it.

The Motion presented this morning was all - we all know it, who practice the monarchical system of government; and one of the cardinal principles of the monarchical system of government, is that the minority will have its say, but the majority will have its way. So, the argument said here that the Opposition should do this equally and that does not arise under the present system of government.

(a p p l a u s e)

I for one have been sitting in the Belizean Legislature from the elections of the 1st of March in 1965; I think, more than some other Members across the Floor; and to every time, the Manifestoes we have put to the people is that we want independence for Belize. That is why, as a young man at the age of seventeen years, I joined the People's United Party

(a p p l a u s e)

because I wanted Belize to be free and offered myself as a candidate to the people from the 1st of March, 1965. To come here in the Honourable House and listen to arguments conceived to deceive the Belizean people, that I must not tolerate. And I invite Members of this Honourable House, as elected Members, regardless of Party that the Motion presented by the Honourable Premier this morning asking for a Joint Select Commission of Members here to fulfil their duties to the Belizean people to consider and support the Motion as presented. Because I remember very clearly in July of 1980 I was deputising for the Honourable Minister of Education in Orange Walk Town on the occasion of the graduation of Muffles College and I remember what I told them and I remember quoting a great Statesman in History, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, when he said in difficult times, Second World War, he said, "there is nothing to fear but fear itself". I believe every Belizean should be made aware of this great Statesman what he said in difficult times, for if he had feared maybe Second World War would have been lost to the other side that began it. But things went the way they were because the people at the time were not afraid. That Belize cannot defend itself, is absolute rubbish. That Belize is not ready for independence, equally. Belize is ready for independence and Belize should be independent. And I say this out of conviction because for seventeen years the people of Belize have been electing their representatives to this Honourable House in free and fair elections on one issue; every time where the Government is concerned - independence, independence, independence. So, that is not a subject that is new or is just being introduced today by this Motion. It is taking the last step.

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I could recall, if we are to use the arguments that because Belize does not have a powerful army or a powerful coast guard or even, to quote from the Motion 'Knowing that Belize should be prepared for a meaningful participation in her own defence by land, sea and air'. I want to know which country can effectively do that; even those who have been independent more than a hundred years. I could think of Mexico for example; I could think of Costa Rica, for example, in Central America. Mexico has about 70,000,000 people. Can it defend itself by land, sea and air against the powerful United States with two hundred and fifty million people? Can it? Costa Rica, for example, in Central America does not even have an army. If Panama or Nicaragua or any other State wants to take over Costa Rica, what is there to prevent it? But as long as you have Belizeans who will be repeating propaganda, that is treachery; and as long as we have that, it only suits our neighbours across who have ambitions on Belize, who have pretensions on Belize.

The other day I was addressing a public meeting in the Town of Punta Gorda and I advised the people 'let us not fall into the trap of fear that some Guatemalan agents in that Town and other evidence within the Community were trying to promote': oh! if you go into independence, Guatemala will position its army. It is good for a Guatemalan General to say that, but when you have a coward Belizean saying that, that is treachery. And I warned then, if every Belizean no matter whether you are rich or poor, whatever your background - if the Guatemalan Government knew that everybody is united for independence, and would not repeat their slogan: oh! they will invade, they will this, they will respect us more even if the time should arise that everyone of us would be prepared to use the gun if need be, should it arise, we should not be afraid to do that. If the Guatemalans knew this, they would never come back with their claims. But above all, once Belize is independent and the borders, as they are, as the People's United Party like to say 'territorial integrity', they will not come and they will not make threats; but as long as they know the Opposition will discourage people against independence, the more you will hear voices from across, discouraging independence. That is why I say this morning that this amendment is a mechanism to vent the views of the very people we claim to be running away from.

We from the Corozal South Division support whole-heartedly the Motion put forward this morning. And to say that who benefits but Guatemala or Great Britain by the getting of independence for Belize, is nothing less but being dishonest to the Belizean people. With independence, we will have more development. More countries will look at Belize, regardless of its size and population, as an equal and will come more ready to its aid.

I was talking to someone in Government of a foreign country and he said 'we would like to help you; what you are asking is very reasonable, but we feel that is the responsibility of the administering power, but we are prepared to sit down together as equals and consider help for Belize'. So, for independence, we are not releasing Great Britain from any obligations. I believe She has truly complied with the obligations of defence in trying times when the Opposition in Belize and the Guatemalan General have been trying to create fear in the Belizean people. They have proven that they were willing to defend Belize if need be or at least they sent their harriers and some navy ships to Belizean shores. At least they served as a deterrent if there would have been anything. To say that Guatemala benefits; it does not. It frustrates Guatemala's pretensions; independence frustrates Guatemala's pretensions, for

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as long as Belize is a dependent territory, the argument that it is in the Guatemalan Constitution can hold, but once Belize is independent, those that put it in the Guatemalan Constitution may have to find a way to take it out for no one in this Honourable House, as far as I am aware, was responsible for putting it there and it is a shame that anybody in this Honourable House should be more concerned that it is in the Guatemala Constitution for it is none of our making. And that is their problem; they created it, and they should find a way to solve it.

That two Members of Parliament came to inspect the defence arrangements in Belize, you all know it; two Members of Parliament cannot speak, five Members of Parliament cannot speak for a Government even if it is 15; you multiply it by three more, they cannot speak for a Government. What matters is when a Minister of Government in the House of Commons makes a statement on Belize that is what you should take into account for that is the Government speaking, not two or three members of Parliament visiting. Occasions have arise where your humble servant; Mr Speaker, I have had the privilege through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to visit other countries and other Parliaments and if I make a statement I am speaking as a Member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association unless it is in the context of Government business. But a Parliament cannot speak as a Government, they are just as a Parliament.

That the dispute should be settled before independence; that's exactly what the Guatemalans have been saying in the context that they should have part of the Toledo District. Should we fall into that trap? I say no, Mr Speaker, we should not fall into that trap.

Mr Speaker, I want to repeat my invitation to this Honourable House that we support the Motion as presented this morning and that you, Mr Speaker, should nominate the Joint Select Commission from Members in this Honourable House and that the mandate being asked by the Motion be carried through so that what we began nearly thirty-one years ago come into fruition.

Lastly, if we are to refute the argument about getting married - an interesting subject - whether female or whether male, after thirty-one years of age, if you do not have a cause committed then something is wrong.

HON. LOUIS S. SYLVESTRE (Minister of Energy and Communications): Mr Speaker, I am certain that the Honourable Member for the Albert Division have not read the Agenda quite carefully because at item 6 where it says 'Papers' it says 'No. HR75A/1/4 - The White Paper - Proposed Terms of a Constitution for the Independent Belize'. There is no debate on independence whether you are going forward for independence, whether you are going to stand still, whether you drop back; this is not the argument. There is a mandate for independence. That is a far gone conclusion. What is being discussed or should be discussed in the House, today, is the setting up of a Joint Select Commission to study, to go out to the people to get their ideas; but this proposed terms of a Constitution is to stimulate the arguments into the minds of our people so that when the whole thing is carried, countrywide, a proper draft of a Constitution for the Independent Belize can be put forward where the Government, the people will not - a government, any government - because when you set a Constitution you don't only think about today, you think about the future where a government at that time cannot take advantage of the people. So this is what should be done,

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that everybody gets together, the Opposition, majority party, get together and come up with a Proposed Terms of a Constitution for Independent Belize. And I think, Mr Speaker, if we can hold it there for the terms of the Constitution, we will be able to leave this House at a reasonable time. But if it gets beyond that avenue, the alley-ways, we'll be in the darkness, as the man said.

(a p p l a u s e)

HON. F.H. HUNTER (Minister of Works): Mr Speaker, we have before us two documents: one is a positive substantive Motion asking us to set up a Committee that will investigate the terms of reference for a Constitution; a forward, positive step; the other is a negative document trying to delay again the spurious arguments that have been rejected by the population as it has been presented on the rostrum over the last thirty years by a negative factor in Belize who have been fighting independence from way back.

The People's United Party from its inception, the anchor point of the Party's philosophy was based on independence. It isn't something new. The last election gave us the mandate. There is no argument about that. This is a Motion to put in force, to put along the line of conclusion that mandate that has been given to us. Red herrings have been introduced into the debate to create a fear psychosis among the people of Belize. They will not stick to the substantive Motion; they have introduced a red herring amendment to use as an excuse to introduce their old rejected arguments against independence. What they really want is independence under themselves and these are delaying Motions because we all want independence, they say, and Belize is ready for independence from the point of Government, from the point of economics and from the point of defence because we are being defended right now as a colony by Great Britain and She gave us Her word and She has given us Her word in front of the international forum of the United Nations by supporting the Motion for a defence guarantee; to guarantee our independence, She has done that voluntarily.

Now, one of the Honourable speakers across the House has brought up the nonsense about not accepting a defence guarantee from Great Britain, but.....

MR SPEAKER: May I ask you to withdraw that remark.

HON. F.H. HUNTER: I withdraw it, Mr Speaker. I withdraw it.

The Honourable speaker has brought up the argument about a defence guarantee from Great Britain not being something we must base our independence on, but in the next word he says "we should accept a training programme from Great Britain in that same era of independence to train us up to a defence standard.

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON: Mr Speaker....

HON. F.H. HUNTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker, or clarification?

MR SPEAKER: A point of order?

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON: Yes, Mr Speaker.

The Member said - he did not name the Member across the House; only the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and myself have spoken on this matter and I don't recall any of us saying that we reject a

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defence guarantee from Great Britain; none of us said that.

MR SPEAKER: That's not a point of order.

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON: Well, a point of correction then, Mr Speaker.

HON. F.H. HUNTER: I am glad he said that then, Mr Speaker; he has clarified his position. He will accept a defence guarantee from Great Britain on independence. I am glad he just clarified that in this House.

So, Mr Speaker, governmentally, we have been exercising this democratic form of Parliamentary Government for a long time and we are well versed on how to govern a country. Many other nations, great nations in the world went into independence forming their Congress or Parliament on the day of their independence. So, we today, are more ready than they were and they have succeeded. So, we are well prepared, well versed, and well schooled on how to govern an independent country because, fortunately, we had a long period of self-government. And in our terms of the Constitution we don't propose to change that system of government. So, we are ready for independence in-so-far as governing ourselves. And, financially, I don't think there are many countries - I think you can count them on the fingers of both your hands - that has the international, financial reputation that little Belize has because we've never been a day late or a penny short on any of our international commitments. And for that very reason, that is why Belize has been able to get more than 20% of the Caribbean Development loans for the less-developed countries. Because of our financial international reputation. So, we can never be more prepared or more ready, financially, for independence than we are. So, the argument that we are not prepared for independence just doesn't hold water. The negative introductions that have come across the Floor is just to hold back the process of moving smoothly into independence.

They throw in the argument of referendum. Referendum has no place in Parliamentary Government. Great Britain, the Mother of Parliament, made the big mistake of introducing referendum on the Common Market entry and if She wants to come out now She cannot get out Parliamentary-wise, unless She calls a referendum again. So, they themselves have found out the mistake of trying to blend a referendum into a Parliamentary system. So, let us not decide if we want a Parliamentary Government with a referendum because it just doesn't exist. Either you have your cake or you eat it but you can't have it and eat it. If you want government by a referendum then you vote for government by a referendum; if you want government by Parliament then you vote for government by Parliament and you don't try to shift from a different system of government as it suits you because then you won't have a democratic government. The people of Belize have picked the House of Representatives, 18 constituencies, proportion of more than 2 to 1 because it is 13 to 5 and all the House Committees on which the Minority Party serves, is set up as a 2 to 1 basis and they have accepted it. We are also asking in this Motion to set up a Select House Committee on the same 2 to 1 basis, and all of a sudden they want a 50/50 basis - that would be prostituting the will of the people - excuse the language, Mr Speaker, but I cannot describe it in no other words. We would be doing a dis-service to the people of Belize. We would be destroying the very basis on which we are governed. Either you're going to govern by a Parliamentary system or you are not. You are not going to swerve from it when it suits you and accept it when it doesn't suit you. For that reason, Mr Speaker, I cannot by no stretch of the imagination, even consider accepting the amendment to the substantive Motion.

Thank you very much.

HON. D.L. MCKOY (Minister of Labour, Social Services and Community Development): I rise, Mr Speaker, to support the substantive Motion before this Honourable House.

From the moment I joined the ranks of the People's United Party, the Movement of Liberation some twenty-nine years ago, this Organisation, the People's United Party, the Movement of Liberation, made its policy and objectives for an Independent Belize fully and categorically known to the people of Belize. There is no doubt, whatsoever, that this Movement, the Movement of Liberation, the People's United Party has as its policy and objectives of the Party (which remains unchanged and) continues to be the aim and ultimate goal of the Government - in fact, the independence of Belize is generally accepted; it is generally accepted that the Party, I recall quite clearly, was organised for the explicit purpose of championing the cause of the Belizean people and achieving for Belize a secure, safe and lasting independence as has been enshrined in the Party's Manifesto for an Independent Belize, and successive manifestoes before when facing general elections over the years. And this endeavour has been crowned and given full support and endorsed from time to time by the electorate including my own constituency. I recall, vividly, that among the issues raised during our last general elections some months ago, the issue of independence, political independence for Belize was the main plank dealt with as well as the social and economic considerations in Belize. Mr Speaker, I give it a special privilege and I would like to appeal to the Opposition to support the substantive Motion which is before this Honourable House today. As true and freedom-loving people of Belize, that the opportunity has now arrived with the blessing of the Almighty, that this Honourable House would begin consideration of an Independence Constitution for Belize today. So many other countries, much, much smaller than Belize have attained their independence and have been successful in carrying their countries to greater prosperity on attaining same in improving the lots of their people.

Mr Speaker, the Government of Belize is a responsible Government and it is, for this reason, it is going through the proper machinery to consult with the people of Belize in every town, village and corner of the country so that the people are given the opportunity to express their views on the type of, and, of course, clearly what our people would like to see enshrined in the Constitution of an Independent Belize. This is democracy at work. As we move closer and closer to the day of independence, Mr Speaker, we continue to place our trust in the hands of our Supreme Being, of the Universe, the Almighty and Eternal God of all ages. With his guidance all things are possible and we cannot go wrong with his help. I am confident that with his continued blessings this orders well and holds good for the future well-being of Belize and its people. We do not want to see a repetition of what has happened seventeen years ago when the move towards self-government was instituted by the People's United Party Government to bring freedom, to bring prosperity, to bring betterment and to bring about a better way of life generally for the people of Belize that we have among our midst here today one of those people who got out there and fast at the bridge foot. And all sort of fears were put into the people of Belize trying to let the people of Belize feel that self-government was going to do so much harm to us. And talking about beneficiaries, one of the beneficiary today of that Constitution, the self-government of Belize, is the Honourable Member himself who is now sitting over there. And he fasted and tried to condemn the effort being made by the people and government of Belize to bring about self-government to this country because as far as we are concerned, this is not a matter for us to be bickering with each other. I think the time has come

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when the Opposition and Government should work together on this issue and to make sure that they give full support to the independence of Belize because there is no question whatsoever that the Opposition - and I want to agree with my Honourable colleague here that if they were to issue, if they were to grant independence tomorrow under the leadership of the Opposition, there would be no debate in this House today; they would accept, hook, line and sinker, because this is what they want, they want to take over the reins of Government and they are using every means possible to be able to do just that. But, the people of this country have given a mandate, the people of this country have spoken in more than one elections, not only one election; not two, not three, many elections, including the last City Council Elections in Belize City.

(interruptions)

No, no. That has nothing to do with the Proposed Terms of the Constitution. We are talking about today. I am only trying to show that the people speak clearly; that only they know what they want. If they wanted to return the Opposition they would have done that.

(interruptions)

The thing is, there is no need for a referendum. There is no need for a referendum on the independence of Belize because if that was what the people decided all of this was interjected into the City Council Elections in the matter of fear, communism, referendum and all sorts of things. And the people voted the way they felt because the people of Belize are intelligent people and they know what they want; they are not asking, they know what they want. And this is why, Mr Speaker interruptions..... So they want me that is why I am here. That is why I am here.

(a p p l a u s e)

And I have been here for several years too; I have been here for quite some time. Oh! yes - yu no si a di even gat grey hair now? I am here almost thirty years now.

Mr Speaker, I personally want to make things quite clear as I have said earlier that my constituency supports independence for Belize because it was on this platform that we ran elections from time; and, particularly, the last General Elections in Belize. And any elected representative of this House who wants to be honest with himself can never face the electorate and tell them that he or she did not understand that one of the issue for the elections was the independence for Belize; not one, because it was an issue. It was red hot; and all of us faced the people and we knew that.

The Premier in his statement, Mr Speaker, made it quite clear that whatever defence arrangements that are being made will be made known to the poor people of Belize; all the people of Belize, in ample time. It cannot be said that the people are being kept in the dark. The Premier was very explicit in his statement and he has made it quite clear that as soon as these arrangements have been reached that everybody will know about it. So there is nothing to worry about. What is all this confusion about; I can't understand.

So, Mr Speaker, I give the substantive Motion my whole and full support, but I do not support the amendment coming from across the way.

(a p p l a u s e)

/HON. S. MUSA.....

HON. S. MUSA (Attorney General and Minister of Education and Sports): Mr Speaker, the issue before the Floor is whether or not we support the amendments proposed by the Leader of the Opposition. And I would say from the very outset, Mr Speaker, that these proposed amendments are nothing but partisan, political issues being introduced, even at this late stage, in a matter which is very clear. What we want to discuss is the Constitution for an Independent Belize. What we want to take to the country, and for the people to consider, is a Constitution. We want them to consider terms that they would want in that Constitution. And even at this late stage, we have the Opposition coming back with their well worn-out arguments about settlement before independence, about referendum, Radio Belize, electoral reform, etcetera, etcetera; old hat arguments that we are now tired of hearing.

As the previous speaker pointed out, the issue interruptions..... When the Member for the Albert was speaking, I respected his right to speak and I trust he will give me that right.

The previous speaker brought up this very interesting point about referendum, Mr Speaker. It cannot be denied that the elections of November 21, 1979, the People's United Party made it perfectly clear to the nation where we stood on the issue of independence. If I might quote from the document again, Mr Speaker, it stated: 'the P.U.P. will champion the people's inalienable right to self-determine their political right and future as a united, sovereign and independent nation. Our independence with all our territory will be achieved either by a peaceful settlement of the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute or by a peaceful security arrangement, and there will be no land cession'. That was taken to the people, Mr Speaker. As for the Opposition, what did they take to the people? No Guatemala. No independence. That was their issue. They took that to the people and the people voted and they voted in the majority for the People's United Party. They voted and gave us the mandate for the independence of Belize; a safe and secure independence.

But, even after November 21 Elections, Mr Speaker, we kept hearing the talk about referendum, referendum. And now, they are trying to say that even last year it wasn't a question of referendum again; but I would like to bring to their attention their own paper, a copy of the Beacon dated December 6, 1980, Mr Speaker, ten days before the election of the City Council of last year, and what did this paper say about independence. It says that a vote for the U.D.P. Nine will show you want a referendum before independence. And the people of Belize City voted out the U.D.P. Nine; no referendum. But, even after this, even after this, even when they made it an issue in the City Council elections - and the Beacon is here so you can see it; so I am surprised that they are still hawking about this issue of referendum, Mr Speaker.

On issues like electoral reform and Radio Belize; we could argue all day, Mr Speaker, about whether or not it is fair, whether or not they have radio time. We could spend days arguing about that. But the point I want to make, today, is that this proposal, the Motion, the original Motion before the Floor is for us to consider the Terms for the Constitution and those are issues that can be taken up in the future Constitution of Belize - the question of electoral reform, the question of freedom of expression of speech, whatever you may wish to call it, whether it's being denied in Belize. In other words, they are being offered now another opportunity to have an input, to have a clear input about a very vital document that will govern Belize for years and centuries to come, a Constitution. And, yet, even now, they take this very narrow-minded approach to say 'we must have our way or we will not participate'. This is what I detect to be the trend.

I trust I am wrong, Mr Speaker. Indeed, I hope I am wrong in my assessment. I hope that even at this late stage that Members of the Opposition will reconsider their position. And even if we do not consider their so-called demands about things that they are raising at this hour, even if we do not support them, that they will see the more vital issue. The more vital issue is for us all to participate; all of us to participate in the Joint Select Committee to go to the country and consult the people on this document. We are not saying that this should be the exact terms for the Constitution of Belize, for the Independent Belize; we are not saying that at all. This is why it is called a White Paper which has a clear parliamentary definition. It is a Government's policy statement about a possible future Independence Constitution. And we are taking it to the people, hopefully, with the support of both sides of this Honourable House. The Opposition will have a full opportunity to study the White Paper. We are not asking them to take any decisions, today, about the contents of the White Paper. All we are asking, a very reasonable request, is to come with us; as Belizeans, let us work together. Let us forget U.D.P. and P.U.P. Let us remember we are Belizeans first.

(a p p l a u s e)

Mr Speaker, the issue is very clear and I hope we could get away from these partisan issues. I hope we could take a more positive approach. I do not see it as partisan, Mr Speaker, to recommend that we set up a Committee in accordance with the established Standing Orders of this Honourable House. This Honourable House has prescribed in its own Standing Orders, Rule 72, I believe, which clearly says 'the composition of such a Select Committee which is two to one'. Now, the Opposition wants to change that composition and they have suggested that if we could go under Rule 93, I believe, which calls for the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the House to consult about changing the arrangement, when no such approach has been made to my knowledge about changing the established rules; so why raise such an issue at all when it is a non-issue. What we have to go by is what the Standing Order calls for that there should be a Joint Select Committee consisting of nine people, in the proportion of two to one. That is set out in the Standing Order. We are not changing anything.

I would like to make a comment on what the Member for Albert said about the Constitution and I am very shocked, indeed, to hear him speak about the future Constitution of Belize with such, such a casual approach to it, to say that the Constitution is no big deal; for a lawyer to say that; for a man who profess to have gone to jail against Colonialism; for a true patriot to get up and say that, that the Constitution is no big deal and that any one can sit down one night and write it, to treat it with such casual approach, I find that very shocking, Mr Speaker, and I believe history will condemn him for that approach because the Constitution of Belize for an Independent Belize is a very, very important document. It is a document that we have to live with. It is a document that will affect the lives of the people of Belize for years to come. And it is not something that we can lightly pass over. We are concerned here with whether or not we want to maintain the rule of law. We are concerned here with whether or not we want to maintain the independence of the Judiciary; we are concerned here about vital things like human rights and the preservation of fundamental freedom. That's what the Constitution is all about; and to call it no big deal, I'm shocked, Mr Speaker. That's all I can say.

Finally, Mr Speaker, let me say that to suggest that Britain is under some kind of legal obligation to defend Belize while it's a dependent territory, but that it has no legal obligation to do so after independence, is not only wrong in law, but it's totally devoid

/of.....

of political reality. If the Government of the United Kingdom does not want to defend Belize or if it wants to betray its promise to defend Belize it could do it anytime before or after independence. Let us understand that quite clear. But in one breath it seems to me that the Member is prepared to accept the good faith of the United Kingdom Government, but in the other breath he is saying they would act in bad faith and betray us. That seems to me to be contradictory in approach but it also displays that lurking fear that he suffers from, that fear of freedom which clouds his entire logical approach to the problem.

So, Mr Speaker, finally I would say that we, all of us in this House, must look at this issue in a very clear light. The issue is whether or not we want to move forward. Independence is an inevitable fact. It will come this year. So let us work together to make sure that it's a safe and secure independence. Let us not cloud the issues with these party political matters. Let us move forward together as Belizeans and let us work together for a good Constitution. This is what I would ask Members to support, Mr Speaker. Thank you.

HON. V.H. COURTENAY (Minister of State): Mr Speaker, the approach adopted by the proposed amendment is an approach which I would like to join my colleagues in condemning. It is an attempt to take what is a serious issue, a very serious matter, and to steep it in politics. In fact, it seems to be an attempt on the part of the Members of the other side of the House to force their will upon the people although it has already been rejected by the people.

When I look at the recitals in this document, they seem to recite identically the political platform of the Opposition, a political position which it is their right to take and it is their right to repeat as often as they may wish. However, it's a position which the people of Belize have time and time rejected, and it is a position which if we are to attempt to accept, today, would be to negate, completely, all the processes of democracy which exist in our country.

Mr Speaker, it seems to me that the request, today, is that the Government should ignore the mandate which the people have given it; should turn its back upon its commitment to the people to move forward to independence; take up those things which the people have rejected; and postpone independence until the British and the Guatemalans decide that they can reach a settlement. It would be to postpone our liberation and to place it in the hands of our greatest enemy, Guatemala. It would mean that the timing of our freedom would be determined, not in Belize City or in Belize but in Guatemala City. Mr Speaker, this is a proposition which I cannot accept. It is a proposition which the Government cannot accept. And it is a proposition which the people of Belize have repeatedly said they will not accept.

The second recital attempts, it seems to me, to disregard all the accepted principles of representative government, for the second recital attempts to do two things: to say, first of all, that the results of elections must be ignored and that we can only rely, to determine the will of a people, upon a device known as a referendum, while at the same time the second recital seems to be saying and suggesting that the electoral system is at fault and that we would need some sort of impartially supervised referendum. In other words, that the Government of Belize is incapable of testing the will of the Belizean people by itself.

/Mr Speaker.....

Mr Speaker, I have stated in this House, before, a number of points on the question of our system of elections. This Government has gone to great difficulty, or rather the last Administration went to great difficulty to provide our country with election machinery upon which we are prepared to stand or fall. It is a machinery that is beyond the comparison with any other system. We are very proud of the system which we have been able to institute in this country, for its fairness and its impartiality.

I would wish, first of all, to examine and analyse the suggestion. The suggestion, as I understand it, coming from the other side of the House, is that the Government should abdicate its responsibility to run elections in this country and that it should hand over that responsibility to two political parties - the Peoples United Party and the United Democratic Party. I am sure that were we to take such an unwise decision, that immediately other political parties would mushroom in this country, each demanding equal right to run the electoral system in this country. But I think that it is important that we should realise that that unwise proposal need not necessarily dispense fairness, justice and equity. To achieve this, Government has provided a system in which people, before registration, are properly tested, are properly identified, are identified by picture and, even though we are ready to vouch for the impartiality of our system, we hand it over to the courts of the land to monthly review that process; every month, every single month, the court reviews that process as it takes place. Mr Speaker, the test of whether the system is operating well, especially since we have a political party that is so concerned about fairplay, is to examine whether they have successfully used that machinery to demonstrate unfairness or injustice or inequity? As far as I am aware, they have seldom even objected to the nomination of one voter. But, in addition to that, I would like to make the point that when this system was first instituted and there were rumours upon rumours of the unfairness of this system, that the entire voters list, according to them was checked by computers, the result of which was that 500 cases of duplicate registration was discovered. It is a matter of public record, Mr Speaker, that each of those 500 challenges were painstakingly examined, and in each case, it was found that there was no duplicity at all. I would also like to remind this Honourable House, Mr Speaker, that the people themselves have spoken about what they think of that system, for more people have registered under that system than under any other system. At the General Elections last year, more people used that system to cast their votes than under any other system. They were satisfied not only to register, but to vote.

And finally, Mr Speaker, I would like to repeat that we heard two types of objections to the system: one which was in the nature of fantasy; of magic ink and all sorts of incredible fourth dimension chemicals. Those spurious charges were treated by the Belizean people who had used the system with the contempt which they deserved. The second form of criticisms were exercised by a number of participants and candidates who went before the Supreme Court of Belize to challenge the fairness of their own elections. Several members took the opportunity to use those provisions, those safeguards (interruption) The law is loaded, says my Honourable Friend, although he appeared professionally, himself, for some of those people, and the result was that not even one of those petitions was even worth the paper upon which it was written.

(a p p l a u s e)

/May.....

May I leave the subject, Mr Speaker, by repeating my challenge which I have given out in this House, that Government has attempted to select as the managers of that system, commissioners who are above reproach in their integrity. And if any man can throw a stone at any member of that Commission, he is free and protected by law to make any charge in this Honourable House against any one of them. They are people of the highest integrity in this community. It is, therefore, Mr Speaker, very unfair, especially on so serious an occasion, to try to introduce into this matter, suspicions about the electoral system in this country and to pretend that it would be acceptable in this country that Government should remove the electoral system from the Commissioners and place it in the hands of the political parties. That is a day which I would regret.

I must deal with this question of referendum. I take the point, and I think that it is a valid point which is made by most of my colleagues on this side of the House, that we did have a referendum. This issue was put to the people, was put to the people very squarely, and we have the answer from the people. But I would like to say, and I believe I have already said it in this Honourable House, that a referendum is not a device which is acceptable and is a practice used in representative Government. In the long history of the British democracy there is one example of a referendum, one and only one. That was the occasion when the United Kingdom Government put to the people admission into the European Community. This was done in very special circumstances. The Labour Party at the time who were parties to the election promised the people that if they got into power that they would hold a referendum to take that decision. It reminds me of the United Democratic Party's position at the last Election. They promised the people that if they were put into power they would take a referendum on independence. It reminds me, as well, of the promise of the United Democratic Party that if they won the Belize City Council Elections that they would then be able to force a referendum. The People's United Party has said to the people at election time that if you elect us we are going forward. The people accepted that position. (interruption) We did not pass a resolution; just to correct the record; we did not pass a resolution offering a referendum. We did agree in a three-party agreement that if a solution was found to the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute, that that solution would be put to a referendum. That was an agreement, that was a three-way agreement. It was not passed in this House (interruption) forgive me, it was not.

MR SPEAKER: It is not according to Parliamentary Practice to have cross-talk. If a remark is made, it may be replied to, but there should be no continuation of cross-talk in the House. Please go on, Mr Minister.

HON. V.H. COURTENAY: Mr Speaker, it would be, for this Government, a betrayal of the wishes of its supporters, the majority of people in this country, if it were now to turn its back upon the commitment which it made. We regard our Manifesto commitments with solemnity and seriousness, and we propose to carry them out. And I think that I can say, categorically, on behalf of the Government that we do not propose to have a referendum on the independence issue. Let that be understood.

Radio Belize. Mr Speaker, again the subject of Radio Belize is raised in this Honourable House. Once again, I speak on behalf of the Minister of Home Affairs and on behalf of the Government of Belize on the question of Radio Belize. Radio Belize is not a new topic in this House or outside. Radio Belize was the subject of

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demonstrations. Mr Speaker, the Government's policy on this is very clear, and I would wish to repeat it for the records that at election time political parties who are contesting the election have equal rights to radio time. Outside of election time it is our view that political parties should not use the radio for their political purposes. However, we have, Mr Speaker, agreed with the Opposition that under special supervision of this House, radio political broadcasts can take place, if I recall it, under ten conditions. Those conditions were negotiated and agreed between the then Government and the Opposition. Mr Speaker, once again I repeat that that machinery and that offer is still open to the Opposition to have party political broadcasts outside of election time.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Radio Belize is available to both political parties on an equal basis for announcements of their public meetings and other functions. That is the policy of the Government, and our view is that we have a responsibility to people, especially in circumstances where there's one radio station that they should not have party political propaganda foisted upon them against their will.

Mr Speaker, we have had a long dissertation about defence. Mr Speaker, it is very easy for us in our particular circumstances to be fearful and to be concerned about a military attack from Guatemala; this is understandable; and Government can understand the fears of some people. In fact, Government itself has some concern about this possibility, and that it has this concern is evidenced by the stand that it has taken, and it has made it very clear that one of the pre-conditions to taking independence is that the Government should be satisfied that it is safe to do so. Mr Speaker, we can't put it in any clearer and simpler terms. Obviously, by dint of size and numbers, Belize must make defence arrangements. I think this is obvious for all of us to understand. What those defence arrangements are and the adequacy of those defence arrangements is a matter which this Government has committed to the people that it will not move without being totally satisfied on the point. This is a categorical assurance given by this Government. It is a categorical assurance given to the people of this country which we propose to honour. But to ask us in mid-stream while those arrangements are being made, to divulge to our enemies where we have reached and where we have not reached, would be foolhardy on the part of any Government. And our position is that we have reliable assurances from a Government upon whom we have relied all our life that they will see us through with our defence requirements. This Government is not going to be content with that alone. This Government proposes that when it is able, when it has finalised its arrangements and is able to announce them, that it will have additional security to offer to the people of Belize. This is our aim. But I must take the point, Mr Speaker, I don't know if my learned friends across the other side of the House understand that the Constitution of Belize is going to be an Act of the United Kingdom Parliament. That the time which is required for the passage of legislation in the United Kingdom and the time which is required for the passage of legislation in this country are two different things; and that if we are to fulfill our commitment, then the Constitution is one of the things which we must have ready so that the United Kingdom Parliament can perform its functions in due time. And it is for this reason that we must prepare ourselves so that we are not found wanting, that we have taken the proper consultations, that we have been responsible and received the views of our population, that our people themselves are

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satisfied that the system under which they will be governed in the future is a system of their choosing. If we are to discharge these responsibilities, then we must make the necessary preparations in due time. I should hate, Mr Speaker, to hear the people of Belize moan and say that you thrust upon them at the very last moment a Constitution upon which they did not have adequate time to reflect. It is just wise and prudent that we should move early. We propose to move swiftly and we have chosen to move now.

In doing so, Mr Speaker, I would wish to say that it is our hope; it is the hope of Government, that the members who represent the Opposition will play their role and will discharge their responsibility to the country and to the people. We have attempted, Mr Speaker, by the Resolution which we tabled and the machinery which we attempted to devise to invite their participation. We have attempted, Mr Speaker, and have gone a long way to put them into the picture of what our intention was. It is regrettable, Mr Speaker, that they should find themselves in the difficulty of having to place before this exercise certain pre-conditions. I would wish this Honourable House to know that the Leader of the Opposition has had the benefit of advanced notice of how the Government proposed to deal with this matter. I would wish this Honourable House to know, as well, that the Government went to the extent of sending, by special messenger, as early as possible, a copy of the Government White Paper to the Leader of the Opposition so that he had knowledge of exactly how the Government proposed to deal with this matter. It is unfortunate that the response to this invitation to deal openly and to move together in this exercise was what he announces this morning that he has sent a letter of complaint to Lord Carrington without even responding to us that he had certain problems in the matter.

The Honourable Member for the Albert Division referred to Standing Order 92 about arrangements between the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. Mr Speaker, no such arrangement has been reached. No attempt was made to make any such arrangement. Instead, after the gesture which we made, it was used to send some letter of complaint to Lord Carrington.

Mr Speaker, very often people in this country wonder why it is the Government and the Opposition cannot move together in a number of ways; and this is but another example of why the Government is unable to deal with the Opposition the way it would wish. That type of relationship, that type of harmony can only arise out of mutual trust and mutual respect. Time and time again, repeatedly, each gesture made by the Government is subverted. This is only another example, Mr Speaker. I would like to make a special plea to the Leader of the Opposition and the Members on the Opposition Benches. I would like to remind you that the people of Belize are showing more clearly that they are fed up and tired of abandonment. They have had the experience of the Opposition running away from them in times of disaster and hurricanes. They have had the experience of the Opposition fasting when important decisions of this nation are being taken. They have had an example of the abandonment of Belize City in the last City Council Administration. They have had the example of the abandonment even of the country by members of the United Democratic Party after the last election. Are the people now going to be abandoned once again in this exercise in search of a Constitution for the Independent Belize? I ask Members of the Opposition Benches please do not abandon the people of the Albert Division, the people of Dangriga, the people of the Mesopotamia Division, of Toledo North and South. Please do not run away from your responsibility in this matter. Please. I plead with you, and I'm not accustomed to pleading; but on behalf of the

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interest of the Belizean people, I plead with you, that you should shoulder your responsibility as Representatives and together as constituting the Opposition of this country. Do not leave the people of Belize on so important an issue without the benefit of the Opposition. It is your right to do as you choose and, no doubt, you will let the nation know in due course. I am, however, inviting you; I am pleading with you (interruption).... Member for the Albert Division, please listen to my plea instead of chattering. You do have a responsibility in this matter. You do have a responsibility to the people.

I heard, for instance, and I recall the phrase 'meeting us half-way'. I recall this phrase being used in terms of the persons who would man this Committee. Mr Speaker, we have to understand the democratic process. We cannot take democracy and throw it through the window. To do so would be to destroy something that is sacred about our country, that which makes us unique in Central America. If the people of Belize in their wisdom, and some of us may think that they were totally unwise, but if in their wisdom they did not decide to put the representatives in this House half/half, then let us respect what the people wanted and what they did. Let the representation on this Committee be in proportion to the membership in this House. It is only fair and honest with the people. That is the way they want it. This is why they voted how they did. It is not a question of meeting anybody half-way. It's a question of doing what is right, what is just, and what is fair.

Mr Speaker, it is regrettable that we should have, on this occasion, found it necessary to face and go through this agonizing debate on issues which have been thoroughly debated in political campaigns. It is regrettable, Mr Speaker, that we come to this House attempting to force rejected policies upon this House. It is regrettable, Mr Speaker, that so important a matter should be treated so lightly. And it is regrettable, Mr Speaker, that we, and I lament this, that we seem to be turning away from the form of representative democracy as we have practised it for many years. I would hope that the members of the Opposition will now, after this long debate, understand the issues that is before this Honourable House; that the Leader of the Opposition, who is notably absent, will withdraw his amendment to the Motion and that he would examine very carefully what the original Motion invited him to do; for it is very simple. It is asking that this House should give authority to the Speaker to appoint Members in accordance with the rules and regulations of our House, to meet together with Members of the Senate to examine what Government has put forward as its views about the Constitution, and to report to this House in its wisdom and having thoroughly consulted the people of this country. It is a process that is completely and fully democratic. It is a process which is seeking to bring the people fully into the picture and it is a process which we hope, and I recall the Honourable Premier's words earlier this morning, of a general invitation to the country to participate in this exercise in democracy.

And I would end on this note, that the responsibility is not only ours in this House, the responsibility is much wider; it is a responsibility of the entire nation and all the institutions in our nation. I appeal, in particular, to the media. But a few days ago a very strange thing happened, Mr Speaker, the Press reports the Honourable Chief Justice as saying that he had no official notification that this year would be the year of independence, that all he had heard was rumours. I can only, Mr Speaker, understand that as the type of service which the media in this country is delivering on important issues. From the most official voice in this country, the voice of the Premier, himself, a public statement was made that this is definitely the year of independence of Belize, and that that

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should not have come to the attention of His Lordship the Chief Justice, is an indictment upon the service which the media is giving to our people. It is unfortunate, but I would invite the media to look at itself in this exercise and to play its part. I would ask it, faithfully, to debate the issues which are before the people of this country, to guide them and assist them in the analysis and argument of that White Paper so that the people will have a full and free opportunity to have their will known even without a referendum.

Thank you very much.

(a p p l a u s e)

HON. A. SHOMAN (Minister of Health, Housing and Co-operatives):
Mr Speaker, I rise to express my views on the amendments put to the Motion by the Leader of the Opposition. And having heard all the previous statements made, I have only become reinforced in my own view, Mr Speaker, that all the various sections of the proposed amendment do, indeed, reflect and represent the political platform of a political party that has been twice rejected in as many years in Belize. But I also believe that all these issues that they have put forward in their amendment: referendum, electoral system, Radio Belize, all these things are only put there to deflect attention from what, I believe, is the sole and the real proposal that they are putting forward in this amendment.

I had occasion, Mr Speaker, to hear the entire text of a political address given by the Leader of the Opposition only two or three weeks ago in San Ignacio, and I believe he repeated the same statement in other towns in Belize. And what he said at that meeting, the entire thrust of his argument, the sole argument, that he sought to put forward and he sought to convince the people was what you see in this amendment, this one paragraph which says "Britain must solve Her dispute with Guatemala peacefully before raising the question of independence for Belize. And the Leader of the Opposition at that time made it very clear. He said: you want to know what the position of the United Democratic Party is on independence? It is this: that we should not go for independence until the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute has been solved by negotiation.

And so, all these other things that have been brought up in this amendment are, to me, merely irrelevant things to pad out that amendment. But the real meet of their proposal is this: that we should agree to postpone the independence of Belize, indefinitely, until such time as the Government of Guatemala agrees with the Government of the United Kingdom that Belize should be independent.

Mr Speaker, I do not believe that any other kind of arguments about anything else that they brought up in that amendment, that proposed amendment, should cloud our thinking or should deflect us from the gravity of that central proposition that they are making which is that we should put the timing and, therefore, the reality, the fact of our freedom, our independence, in the hands of the Government of Guatemala. That is their central argument; that is their position; it is a position which you will not be surprised to hear, Mr Speaker, which is identical to the position held by the Military Government of Guatemala today; and it is a position that they have held for many, many years. It is, incidentally, also a position held by their puppet party in the South of Belize, the T.P.P. The T.P.P., the U.D.P. and the Government of Guatemala are expressing exactly the same position on the question of the independence of Belize which is that Guatemala should decide when Belize should become independent.

/HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON.....

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON (Albert): Yes, Mr Speaker, it is a point of order.

I must protest this gross misrepresentation that the United Democratic Party and the Government of Guatemala when we call for the defence of this country that is against what Guatemala wants; but we won't do what Guatemala wants.

MR SPEAKER: Both sides of the House will have a chance to rebutt whatever is said by Members of Government side in this debate when the debate is being wound up by the mover of the amendment. As it is, that is not a point of order.

HON. A. SHOMAN: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I have sat, myself, around the negotiating table with representatives of the Government of Guatemala. I have read records of negotiations that have occurred before them. I have read statements made both in the recent past and over the years made by representatives, Presidents, Foreign Ministers, Generals of the Government of Guatemala, and their central position is that Belize should not become an independent country; indeed, should not change its constitutional status unless the Government of Guatemala agrees to do so in a negotiated settlement with the United Kingdom. That is the clear and public record of the position of the Government of Guatemala.

The position of the U.D.P. says that Belize should not become independent unless and until the Government of Guatemala agrees with the Government of the United Kingdom in a negotiated settlement. Now, I am saying that the two positions are exactly the same and if the Honourable Member for the Albert Division doesn't like it, then he should try and get his Party to change their position, because their present position is exactly the same as that of the Military Government of Guatemala.

When the Leader of the Opposition was in New York on the 28 October this year, he made a statement to the Fourth Committee of the United Nations, in 1980. He said what the Opposition invites is a negotiated and common approach to common problems such as security, economic and social development and all facets of human interactions beneficial to the region and to mankind as a whole. He was telling the United Nations Fourth Committee that what his Party wanted was a negotiation and common approach to problems of the security of Belize, and he was talking about relations with Guatemala. He wanted to negotiate and to come to a common approach on our crucial problems of security, of economic development, of social development; a very similar position that is held by the T.P.P. and that they promulgate in their speeches and in their newspapers. Now, what can we expect in such a negotiation with the Government of Guatemala? How can we involve ourselves in negotiating with them the security of our country? How can we put, in the common language, the rat to mind the cheese? How can we expect Guatemala to negotiate with us over our own security and that we are supposed to be satisfied with that. But worst than that, Mr Speaker, how can we tell the world and tell Guatemala that we will not become independent unless they reach a settlement with England, and not at the same time tell them that this gives them the power to dictate their terms in that settlement; because if we are saying that we will not move until they reach agreement - agreement has to be reached by two parties, and one of those parties is Guatemala. And so, Guatemala can demand and insist on its terms. And what are those terms? It is not that we are ignorant of those terms; we know what those terms are; they want lands. The strategy of the Opposition is to

/allow.....

allow Guatemala to dictate those terms and, therefore, to take the lands that they so desire.

We don't have to guess at this, Mr Speaker. We have heard them make public statements; we have been involved in negotiations with Guatemala; we have made the Opposition leaders aware of the demands of Guatemala - their demands are land cession; and we have put a strong position of no land cession. But how can we maintain such a position if in the same breath we say but we won't do anything unless you agreed to a settlement. We are giving them the power over our lives and still say, but please don't take our lands; that is an unrealistic and an unreasonable position, Mr Speaker. If we are prepared to say we will not give up our lands, and if we are prepared to say we will not give up our sovereignty, we will not allow Guatemala to rule us in any way; if we are prepared to say that, then we must also be prepared to say as the House of Representatives said in the Resolution which the Honourable Member for the Albert Division referred to, July 25, 1980, that we will go on to independence with or without the agreement of Guatemala.

(a p p l a u s e)

And, therefore, for the Leader of the Opposition to come now after we have passed that Resolution, after we have been once again to the United Nations, after we have gone through the electoral process and where the people of Belize have said, yes, we want to be free; yes, we want to go ahead with the independence of Belize; if after all of that, the Leader of the Opposition can come to this House and suggest once again that we should not move on to independence until Guatemala agrees, is an act which almost defies description, if I am to keep as I intend to, Mr Speaker, to the Parliamentary language that is expected of Members in this House. I, therefore, leave it to your imagination.

Mr Speaker, one of the old tried tricks that has been used by the Government of Guatemala to try to influence the people of Belize in their re-actions to the unfounded and unjust claims of that country has always been to try to instill fear in the people of Belize. They have done this in many different ways. They have in their budget every year a large sum of money which is specifically designated for use in their attempts to take over Belize. And they use this money, not only on their side of the Border, but also on our side of the Border; and one of the main purposes of the use of these funds is to have people and organizations help them in their campaign to create fear in the people of Belize for their independence and freedom.

(a p p l a u s e)

What are we witnessing, Mr Speaker, is more than one organization springing up, and more will come up before the independence of Belize is achieved, and we must guard and beware, look out for them and be prepared to fight them; springing up and trying in different ways to create fear in the people, the fear of freedom that the Honourable Member for the Albert Division seems to have. It is a fear of freedom. And they are trying to create this fear in our people. Just another arm; the right arm in Guatemala is trying to do one thing and the left arm in Belize is trying to do exactly the same thing, both of them controlled by the same head, which is the Military Government of Guatemala, which has a reason and a purpose for stopping the independence of Belize, and which is trying to do so by many ways, and one of them is to create an unreasonable fear in our people.

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One of the things that one of the speakers on the other side was talking about, today, was the question of security, and they tell us that they have spoken to some Parliamentarians that came from the United Kingdom, and that they were told that British troops were to remain in Belize for two years. Mr Speaker, lest there be any misunderstanding from any member of the public that may be listening or may hear about this debate in the future, let me say, categorically, that there is absolutely no such agreement or statement by the British Government that would limit their staying in Belize for two years; no such statement; there is nothing, no agreement made between the British Government and the Belizean Government which limits - and I am saying this very explicitly, and I want it carefully recorded, Mr Speaker, there is no such agreement which limits the presence of British troops in Belize for two years. As I understand it, the agreement has not yet been reached; it is being worked on and the principle is that the United Kingdom is accepting the responsibility to defend Belize in whatever way is necessary for as long as may be necessary; that is how I understand it. And, therefore, for the Honourable Member to come and put in this putative two years, this non-existent two years agreement on the record, is very misleading and is part of the campaign of fear which they are, along with the Guatemalan Government, trying to engender in our people.

Mr Speaker, when you consider that the Government of Belize has worked very hard over the last few years to create a climate in our country, to create an international climate which will see the birth of Belize in as safe and secure conditions as possible, when you consider that there may not be any other country that has become independent in recent years that has had so much attention focussed on its security for so long a time before its independence, that is so cushioned, that is watched over so jealously and so carefully by countries that are our friends in the United Nations by the United Kingdom which has a responsibility for our foreign affairs and our defence, and when you consider that Belize is going to its independence perhaps with more protection than any other country has done in recent history, then you begin to wonder why is it that certain Members bring up this false fear about our security only to serve the purpose of delaying, indefinitely, the independence of Belize. And you begin to wonder why is it that they are so doing and so serving the interest of the very Government that claims our territory and wants to dominate our people. It makes us very, very suspicious, indeed, Mr Speaker. But I believe that as many other Members - well, I know as many other Members have stated before, that those voices represent a minority in our country. It was proven in the elections in November, 1979; it was proven again in the elections in Belize City in December, 1980 when they made an issue of the independence of Belize; they made an issue of communism; they had big placards at every voting station saying "Vote Against Communism and Independence; Vote for Referendum". And the people rejected them by the biggest majority in which any party has ever been defeated in the Belize City Council elections; they were thoroughly thrown out, thrashed out and thrashed by the voters of Belize City. So, if you believe your own propaganda, if Members on the other side believe their own propaganda, then they would hide their faces in shame before coming back and repeating the same things here in this Honourable House. But what gives us confidence, what gives us hope, Mr Speaker, is this. It will not have escaped your attention that among our good visitors in the Gallery, today, are many young people, young people who, I believe, want to see men and women representing their country, who are prepared, courageously, to take a stand and to move their country forward to the freedom and the independence that has been denied us for so long. And I believe that those young people can be heartened to know that there is a majority of men and women who are able and willing to stand firm, to stand strong, and

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to say we want to be free and we shall be free.

(a p p l a u s e)

HON. T. ARANDA (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Speaker, we have heard quite a lot about the amendment proposed by us, except for the fact that the content and the spirit of the amendment seemed to have been missed completely. I have heard a lot of harangues; I have heard a lot of (interruptions)..... I said 'harangues'. I have heard a lot of statements about independence when that was not the spirit of my amendment. The spirit of my amendment are the things that we need to do before moving into independence, and the things that we need to do and the things that we need to watch out for, so that we can protect Belize the best possible way. That was the spirit of my amendment. What I said, in essence, is that before we do what the Motion came out with, that is to move towards the development of a Constitution, what I said is that there are quite a few things that we need to look at first, agree on, work out, before we get to that point. Nobody said anything about rejecting independence. None. We have said it over and over again, and I make it clear now: the United Democratic Party wants independence; but because it wants independence, it wants a secure one so that we can be independent and safe after the political part and the rituals of independence come out. We don't want to be an East Timor, a country which when it was celebrating its independence, it was grabbed up and taken over by another nation.

Vietnam fought a war for fourteen years, and after those long years of war and maiming of people, destruction; we end up with one single Vietnam. We don't want that for Belize. That's what this country, and that's what we, the Opposition, are asking for; the people of Belize are asking of their Government, the sense and the responsibility to negotiate and to take the appropriate step of defence and security for the people. And that's what we are talking about.

I heard one man say - a Member, sorry - a Member say about the case of Mexico and Costa Rica. Yes, quite true Mexico and Costa Rica do not have powerful defences, but neither do they have any country that claims their territory. The only significant situation here in Belize is that Belize, itself, is threatened; therefore, we need extra precaution so that we are certain we can survive.

I have also heard, again, another Member say that we are working on the basis of fear. What I would like to say to that is this: there is a difference between courage and foolhardiness; rushing into trouble; rushing into problem is not courage; being careful of trouble is not cowardice; let us not confuse caution and sense with cowardice.

I also hear another Member say that we, the Opposition Members, are arguing along with Guatemala. What my amendment said, and I can go back to it right now, is that Britain settles Her dispute with Guatemala; we are not asking Guatemala to do anything for us; we are not asking Guatemala to settle her dispute with England; we are asking England, the Nation that has Belize as a Colony, the Nation that has responsibility for Belize; we are asking that Nation to settle its problem with Guatemala. We are not in any way, shape or form, going to Guatemala or asking Guatemala or siding with Guatemala on any issue; we are asking for our, the Belizean, security and that's what we are working on. So, the stress by the Member for Cayo North on Guatemala becomes gratuitous and false.

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In 1961, the issue of defence for Belize was brought into the House. And at that time the statement made to the people of Belize was that Belize was surrounded by friendly nations, and that we did not need any defence. From the way the trend of conversation goes on, today, that same thing is coming at us again. Let us not be afraid of Guatemala; let us not be afraid of this; let us not be afraid of that; in other words, rush into it and get your head cut off.

We, Mr Speaker, have stood on that and we stand on that: that Belize deserves the best and the greatest security because we, the Belizeans, should see and look after it.

The other speaker too, the Member for Collet, indicated that some papers were sent to me without saying, in the least, when those papers were sent. He wants to give the impression that I was consulted, that I was spoken to, long ahead of time, so-to-speak. The papers got to me, Mr Speaker, that is, the White Paper got to me yesterday. So, what I say here is this: that whatever reaction I, personally, have to anything that is put in front of me is my personal reaction, the way I see it and I have the freedom to react to things the way I see fit. And I want that understood.

It is the responsibility of a Government; it is the responsibility of responsible people to react to things the way we see it fit. Therefore, again, Belizeans must react to the situation as Belizeans see it fit, not as thirteen people see it fit.

Another statement that came about, again, was that England has not put, so-to-speak, a time limit on the defence that it might give us. When we brought up that same issue to the Parliamentarians, they told us that nobody would believe that Britain is going to give a limitless and a timeless guarantee. So that this so-called campaign of fear is nothing but something of a smoke-screen that is to deceive Belizeans into comfort.

And one thing I would like to say to the people of Belize: the worst thing that can happen to a Nation is to feel safe when it is not. Belizeans must not be made to feel safe by the Government or the People's United Party, because the people of Belize are not safe. Leave those people to decide for themselves, and let them be the ones to know which way to go.

Again, I have heard it said over and over again, as if the voice of minority was a voice of error. Throughout history that has proved itself to be wrong; minority is not necessarily wrong. We had people like Gallileo, Copernicus, Einstein, great brains, standing all alone against the world to change the mind of the world about issues and they were and are right as we proved afterwards. And it would be very bad for Belize to prove itself wrong after it has moved into independence because independence is irretractable. Once you are independent, whether you find the error there or not, it will not help you; you are there and you will have to sink or swim. And in this case, the concern of the United Democratic Party is that Belize not sink.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Belize has been hurt. Over the past seventeen years when we have been under internal self-government, the things that I am asking for as the pre-requisites for independence should have been done. They have not been done up to now and we are still being asked to trust the very people that did not do their job when it was their turn to do it. Belize has been hurt enough and Belize has been jeopardized enough; to jeopardize it any further, Mr Speaker, is nothing short of a criminal

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act. Belize needs safety. Don't take it away from it. Increase, augment, multiply that safety. Don't divide it. So I ask, again, that in spite of the fact that our Motion has been given the ugly terms that it has been given, it is a Motion which is intended to guarantee a security for Belize so that Belize can be safe. We insist that England solve her own problem and not dump it on Belize because Belize will not be able to deal with that problem.

Again, I say that before Belize moves into independence that the people of Belize be the ones to decide and that the electoral system control be fair and impartial, because at this moment, it still is not, and that Belize develop a meaningful defence for itself by land, sea and air and that when Belize is independent there is, in fact, a security for it to survive. I don't know in what sense those requests or those expectations are in any way, shape or form, short of the patriotic feeling of people that are interested in the welfare of the people and the welfare and the good of the country. I don't see any way, shape or form, in which those requests can be condemned as they have been condemned in this House of Assembly today. I wonder at times whether it is the interest of Belize that rules us most, or the interest of a party in substitution and in usurpation of a Government. I wonder at times.

So, Mr Speaker, all that I have heard about the amendment that I have proposed have been some of the most spurious argument that I can ever imagine, and it seems to come from all over and all around the Government side. You cannot be concerned about Belize without being someone else other than patriotic. The concern of the United Democratic Party is the safety and the security of Belize.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Question is that the House of Representatives:

Noting that some significant questions need to be dealt with prior to raising the question of independence for Belize;

Recognizing that Britain must solve her dispute with Guatemala peacefully before raising the question of independence for Belize;

Recognizing further that the people of Belize be given an opportunity to express their wish through an impartially organized and impartially supervised referendum on the question of independence for Belize;

Seeing that a reform whereby the electoral system and Radio Belize be controlled by a fair and impartial body;

Knowing that Belize should be prepared for a meaningful participation in her own defence by land, sea and air;

Knowing further that Belize be assisted in establishing adequate defence arrangement for post-independent Belize;

Declares that the above-mentioned priorities be referred to a Joint Select Committee comprising six Members of the House of Representatives and three Members of the Senate to be appointed after an agreement between the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition to achieve a representation on the Joint Select Committee proportional to the support each party showed in the last General Election;

/And.....

And further declares that the Joint Select Committee proceed thereafter to consider the White Paper on the Constitution for the Independent Belize;

And directs the Joint Select Committee to canvass the opinions of the Belizean people before presenting its final report to the National Assembly.

Those in favour of the Motion, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the noes have it.

I will now put the Resolution.

Honourable Members, the question is that the House of Representatives

HON. G. PRICE: I was going to speak on the Motion.

MR SPEAKER: I am sorry. Go ahead, Mr Premier.

HON. G. PRICE (Premier and Minister of Finance): On the Motion.....

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON: Mr Speaker, before the Honourable Premier speaks on the Motion - as he is the mover of the Motion, I know he has the right to wind it up - I was wondering if I could have a few words on the Motion itself before the Honourable Premier speaks. Very briefly.

MR SPEAKER: You spoke once already.

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON: I know, Mr Speaker, but I submit most respectfully my right to speak on the substantive Motion. I will be very brief because I know we had a long debate and I don't want to prolong it, but I think it's my right to speak on the substantive Motion before its put to the vote.

MR SPEAKER: The Premier has already risen to finalize the debate and I don't think it's possible for anybody else to

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON: But it's on the amendment, Mr Speaker, that I spoke.

MR SPEAKER: The amendment has already been put and defeated.

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON: I know that, but what I'm saying is that my previous speech was on the debate on the amendment. I am entitled to speak on the substantive Motion itself before it is put to the vote.

MR SPEAKER: Very well, go ahead.

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON (Albert): I'm most grateful to you, Mr Speaker, because I know we have tried your patience.

Mr Speaker, it is very important, I think, that the Members in this House can see the reasonable request of the Opposition. Even though they may pass this Motion today, because they have the majority to do it, I would urge upon them the thought that this is the second time in twenty years that they have rejected a proposal from the Opposition regarding the defence of Belize. The

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first time they claimed that there was no need for any such defence because Belize is surrounded by friendly neighbours. Now, in substance, they are saying the same thing, and I would like to point out to them that they are running a very dangerous course for this country if they persist in that line. I would also like to mention, Mr Speaker, I would like to remind them that it's hardly seven months ago that the principle of referendum was accepted by them in a resolution passed by them. They, themselves, passed the resolution saying that in case of a Guatemalan settlement they would put it to a referendum to the people. Now, they are saying that referendum is against the

HON. F. H. HUNTER: On a point of order. We are debating the selection of a House Select Committee, not defence.

MR SPEAKER: I think the Honourable Minister of Works is quite in order. You are to confine your remarks to the reference of this Motion to a select committee.

HON. P. GOLDSON: Yes, Mr Speaker.

I would say, Mr Speaker, in relation to the Select Committee that since the Honourable Members on the other side have absolutely refused to meet the genuine and legitimate concern of the Opposition, they cannot expect us to go along with them just to lend colour to make people believe that all that is necessary regarding independence is to have a committee consulting them about a Constitution. That, Mr Speaker, I submit is important, but it is not the most important matter in this whole situation; and for that reason, it is regrettable on the part of the Opposition, that the two parties have not been able to come to any agreement this evening on this matter. I go further, that the ruling party will not just throw their weight around on the basis of numbers and will consider carefully the concern of the Opposition; and even though they have not been able to meet it, today, that they reconsider the position as far as the future is concerned and that, in addition to the Constitution we should deal with the other important matter which concerns the people of this country. Once they agree to that, I'm certain that they and the Opposition can find common ground.

HON. G. PRICE (Premier and Minister of Finance): Mr Speaker, in the circumstances and in the onward march of history, the best interests of Belize demand that the people and Government go forward to carry out the preparation for a secure and safe independence of Belize with all its territory intact. This preparation, as the Motion describes, would involve the setting up of a Joint Select Committee which will consult with the people of Belize, gather their views and return to the House. That is the Motion before us. To delay or to postpone the independence of Belize secure with all its territory, with the argument that we must first carry out or that we must first have a settlement of the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute is a policy that in the end leads to land cession. We cannot repeat this too often because in all these years, seventeen years of negotiations, it has become clear that the only condition, the only way Guatemala will settle its dispute with the United Kingdom is for Belize to give up land. Those, who say in one breath that they are against land cession, and in the next breath they say postpone the independence of Belize until the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute is settled, are trapped in a destructive contradiction. Therefore, let us move onward to a secure and safe independence with all its territory intact because there will be a security arrangement.

(a p p l a u s e)

MR SPEAKER.....

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I will now put the Motion.

Honourable Members, the Question is -

"That the House of Representatives:

Noting the Government White Paper on the Proposed Terms of a Constitution for the Independent Belize laid on the Table of this Honourable House today;

Recognising the importance of so basic and fundamental a document to the lives of all Belizeans and the society in which they shall live;

Intending that the National Assembly shall offer full opportunity for all Belizeans freely to express their wishes upon the Constitutional proposals of the Government;

Declares that the White Paper on the Proposed Terms of a Constitution for the Independent Belize shall be referred to a Joint Select Committee comprising six Members of the House of Representatives and three Members of the Senate to be appointed in accordance with Standing Orders by the Honourable Speaker and the Honourable President, respectively, for its consideration, examination and report;

And directs the Joint Select Committee to canvass the opinions of the Belizean people before presenting its final report to the National Assembly."

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

I now, therefore, nominate the Honourable S.W. Musa, Attorney General and Minister of Education and Sports; the Honourable F.H. Hunter, Minister of Works; the Honourable F.J. Marin, Minister of Natural Resources; the Honourable V.H. Courtenay, Minister of State; the Honourable Dr. T. Aranda, Leader of the Opposition; the Honourable Curl Thompson, Member of the Mesopotamia Division, to be the Members of the Joint Select Committee, and in accordance with Standing Order, direct that the first meeting of the Committee be held immediately after the Sitting of the Senate on Tuesday, 3rd February, 1981. The three Members from the Senate will be nominated by the Senate in due course.

HON. T. ARANDA (Leader of the Opposition): I would just like it recorded that I decline the nomination.

III BILLS FOR SECOND READING

1. Dangerous Drugs (Amendment) Bill, 1981

HON. A. SHOMAN (Minister of Health, Housing and Co-operatives): I rise to move the Second Reading of a Bill for an Ordinance to amend the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, Chapter 85 of the Laws of Belize.

To put it in a nutshell, Mr Speaker, what this amendment seeks to do is to tighten up the provisions for the control and the abuse of dangerous drugs in Belize. It does so by giving a more comprehensive definition of the drugs that are considered

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dangerous and adding to the list of those drugs in the light of the experience that we have had since the last time that the Ordinance was amended. We also seek to increase, substantially, the fines and the sentences imposed on conviction for the use and illicit sale of dangerous drugs in the country and we provide for the mandatory disposal of any vehicle, vessel or aircraft seized by the police, such vessel having been used in the commission of an offence under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance. We allow for the early disposal of large quantities of substances that have been seized by the police. Sometimes they seize a large supply of dangerous drugs and then usually have to hold it until the time of the trial which can be several months later. We allow in this amendment for the destruction of most of that and the retaining of a sample which can be used as evidence in the court. We provide the police with power of search with respect to any vessel, vehicle or aircraft which is thought to be a carrier of drugs and we allow on conviction for the mandatory seizure of such a vessel or aircraft.

Generally, we are tightening up on the laws relating to dangerous drugs and I believe it will have the support of all Members of the House.

I, therefore, move its Second Reading.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Question is that a Bill for an Ordinance to amend the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance Chapter 85 of the Laws of Belize, be read a Second Time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill accordingly read a Second Time and, pursuant to Standing Orders, committed to a Committee of the Whole House.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the House will now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to consider the Bill which has been read a Second Time.

MR SPEAKER left the Chair.

IV COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE ON BILLS

[In the Committee]

The Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

1. Dangerous Drugs (Amendment) Bill, 1981

Clauses 1 to 10 agreed to.

Bill to be reported back to the House without amendment.

MR SPEAKER resumed the Chair.

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1. Dangerous Drugs (Amendment) Bill, 1981

HON. A. SHOMAN (Minister of Health, Housing and Co-operatives)
Mr Speaker, I rise to report that the Committee of the Whole House has considered the Bill for an Ordinance to amend the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance Chapter 85 of the Laws of Belize, clause by clause, and has agreed to report it back to the House without amendment and I, therefore, move the Third Reading of the Bill.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Question is that a Bill for an Ordinance to amend the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance Chapter 85 of the Laws of Belize, be read a Third Time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill accordingly read a Third Time.

B. Private Members Business

I MOTIONS

1. Adoption of Report of Special Select Committee on the Iglesia Universal Cristiana (Belize) Bill, 1980

HON. V. CASTILLO (Corozal North): Mr Speaker, I move that the House adopts the report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Iglesia Universal Cristiana (Belize) Bill, 1980.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Question is that the House adopts the report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Iglesia Universal Cristiana (Belize) Bill, 1980.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

2. Adoption of Report of Special Select Committee on the Belize Evangelical Mennonite Church Bill, 1980

HON. V. CASTILLO (Corozal North): Mr Speaker, I move that the House adopts the report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Belize Evangelical Mennonite Church Bill, 1980.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Question is that the House adopts the report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Belize Evangelical Mennonite Church Bill, 1980.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

3. Adoption of Report of Special Select Committee on
the New Apostolic Church (Belize) Bill, 1980

HON. P.S.W. GOLDSON (Albert): I move that the House adopts the report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the New Apostolic Church (Belize) Bill, 1980.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Question is that this House adopts the report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the New Apostolic Church (Belize) Bill, 1980.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

II THIRD READING OF PRIVATE BILLS

HON. V. CASTILLO (Corozal North): I move that the Bill for an Ordinance to provide for the incorporation of the Iglesia Universal Cristiana (Belize) be read a Third Time.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Question is that a Bill for an Ordinance to provide for the incorporation of the Iglesia Universal Cristiana (Belize) be read a Third Time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill accordingly read a Third Time.

HON. V. CASTILLO (Corozal North): Mr Speaker, I move that the Bill for an Ordinance to provide for the incorporation of the Belize Evangelical Mennonite Church be read a Third Time.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Question is that a Bill for an Ordinance to provide for the incorporation of the Belize Evangelical Mennonite Church be read a Third Time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill accordingly read a Third Time.

HON. C. THOMPSON (on behalf of the Member for Albert): I move that the Bill for an Ordinance to provide for the incorporation of the New Apostolic Church (Belize) be read a Third Time.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Question is that a Bill for an Ordinance to provide for the incorporation of the New Apostolic Church (Belize) be read a Third Time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill accordingly read a Third Time.

/ADJOURNMENT.....

ADJOURNMENT

HON. G. PRICE (Premier and Minister of Finance): I move that the House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed by the Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the House now stands adjourn to a date to be fixed by the speaker.

Adjourned at 5:00 p.m.
