

No. 38 of 2009



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

FOURTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**FIRST SESSION
TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER 2009**

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MAURITIUS

Fourth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 38 of 2009

Sitting of Tuesday 15 December 2009

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

at 11.30 a.m

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENT

DR. JAMES BURTY DAVID – OBITUARY

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, it was with complete stunned disbelief that we learnt of the passing away of our colleague, hon. Dr James Burty David. It is not possible for me to be splendidly eloquent on the death of so beloved a friend of so many years who also had a longstanding and privileged relationship with the Father of the Nation, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam.

He joined the Labour Party as a teenager in 1962 out of conviction in the virtues of socialism and the quest for freedom and liberty for our people. He never wavered in his convictions nor in his loyalty. It was this unwavering conviction that singled him out in an age when so many succumbed to opportunism and expediency.

He was a man of unflinching loyalty, integrity and exceptional ability and the Labour Party, recognising his qualities, made him successively its President, its Secretary-General and its Director of Communications. He was motivated always by public service and the common weal. And he found in the Labour Party the conduit to express his social conscience.

He had studied the languages at the University of Bordeaux where he obtained a “*Doctorat en Lettres*”. He then pursued a long and fruitful career as an educationalist. He was a teacher at Bhujoharry College since the early 70’s and Rector of Eden College for more than a decade. He was also a part-time TV lecturer and a freelance journalist.

He was also the author of many books. Literature was his lifelong passion. He read widely, avidly and voraciously. As a teacher, he felt it was his mission to inculcate in his students his love of literature. And he imparted to them his appreciation of the beauty and sublimity of the most inaccessible texts.

He taught them not only to see but to open their souls. And he was deeply influenced by his readings of philosophy. He melded spirituality and hard-headed realism, the esoteric and the pragmatic.

And he chose politics as a means to give expression to his deep humanism. Even, when he was Minister, he still found time occasionally to give lectures on literature.

As the country mourns James Burty David, thousands of his former students mourn their mentor and guide. I hope they will be inspired in life by their teacher's credo-

“aller jusqu’au bout de nos rêves pour découvrir l’essentiel”.

He lived his life by this principle. He first entered Parliament in December 1976, being elected as the second member for Constituency No 18, Belle Rose/Quatre Bornes.

As a backbencher, he made his mark as an outstanding orator with unusual verve and passion that was to become his trademark. He could ignite the deepest affection and the liveliest enmity. But above all, he was a valiant and relentless fighter true to his convictions.

In my family, Mr Speaker, Sir, we recall with gratitude and emotion, his constancy after the Party's defeat in the 1982 elections. At a time of mass desertion and shameful defection, he stood by the Father of the Nation and was always by his side, a pillar of strength in those dark and uncertain days.

He was to play an instrumental role in the revival of the Labour Party when others were ready to consign the Party to history. He was successively Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Minister of Local Government and the Environment. In September 2008, his responsibility was enlarged to Minister of Local Government, Rodrigues and the Outer Islands.

In each of these Ministries, he made his mark with his no-nonsense approach and his ability to get things done. Even when he shouldered Ministerial responsibilities, he never lost his common touch and was in permanent and close contact with his constituents. Besides, Mr Speaker, Sir, he died amongst them, performing his public duty in his constituency.

On the international level, he represented Mauritius with distinction in the Socialist International and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the sudden passing away of Dr. James Burty David is a cruel shock to all of us. It is a poignant reminder of the illusion that is death, in the words of Shakespeare in Macbeth -

“there is nothing serious in mortality
All is but toys. Renown and grace is dead
The wine of life is drawn and the mere less is left this vault to brag of”.

And that-

“Tomorrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.
Out, out, brief candle!
Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.
It is a tale, told by an idiot,
Full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the untimely death of Dr. James Burty David is a reminder to all of us, that –

In the midst of life we are in death.
And that we are all merely and helplessly human
and just as subject to the whims of incalculable fate,
which are not to be denied by wealth, or intellect,
nor by grandeur of aspiration.
We know that the fates, the Gods,
Powers beyond logic or comprehension,
are jealous of man's aspirations and
that the princeliest of human lives are at their mercy.

We should therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.

May the soul of our departed and cherished friend, Dr. James Burty David, now find the peace it so richly deserves.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request you, to be kind enough to direct the Clerk of the National Assembly to convey the deep condolences of the Government and of this Assembly to his wife, Lilette, and their two children Fabrice and Crystèle and to the other members of the bereaved family.

I thank you.

The Leader of the Opposition: Mr Speaker, Sir, I join with the hon. Prime Minister in what has just been said and I would request you to convey to the family of deceased Dr. James Burty David our deepest condolences.

M. le président, dimanche dernier - il y a deux jours - c'est le pays tout entier qui s'est retrouvé en état de choc à l'annonce de la mort subite et totalement inattendue de feu Dr. James Burty David; son épouse, ses enfants, ses proches avant tout, bien sûr, mais même ses adversaires politiques.

Never, Mr Speaker, Sir, has a member of this august Assembly, a Minister of the Republic, passed away in such an unexpected and brutal manner. *Dans un moment pareil, c'est avant tout à sa veuve et ses enfants que vont mes pensées et à qui j'adresse mes sympathies les plus sincères.* I also wish to express my sympathy to the Mauritius Labour Party and to its present leader.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to join Dr. the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition in extending my heartfelt and sincere condolences to those who mourn, and particularly his spouse and children, the sudden and untimely demise of Dr. the hon. James Burty David.

I have had the privilege of knowing Dr. James Burty David for almost 34 years.

We were both elected to this August Assembly at the December 1976 General Election and had the distinct opportunity to serve under the Prime Ministership of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. We shared the same political philosophy and ideals.

Dr Burty David was imbued with such intellectual capabilities that he could stand up and speak in any forum with rare determination and zeal.

He had a thorough mastery of his brief and ability to marshal arguments. James Burty David never flinched in his principles in the worst of adversities and this made him a man of conviction.

He was the sort of man who makes you understand what Edmund Burke meant when he wrote of politics being “philosophy in action”. He combined integrity, humility, open-mindedness and unshakable principles. He was deeply and genuinely sensitive to peoples’ misfortunes. Deep down in his heart there was mercy and generosity and a firm desire to give happiness to people.

A powerful orator, a prolific writer and a distinctive educator and parliamentarian, he has left an indelible mark in the history of our country. I sincerely believe that he has done his duty for his country.

Hon. Members, I will direct the Clerk to convey to the family of Dr. the hon. David the expression of sympathy recorded at this day’s sitting.

Now, I will kindly request hon. Members to stand in their places to observe one minute of silence as a tribute to the memory of the late Dr. the hon. James Burty David.

(Members observed a minute of silence)

PAPERS LAID

The Prime Minister: Sir, the Paper has been laid on the Table -

A. Prime Minister's Office –

Certificate of Urgency in respect of the following Bills -

- (a) The Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill (No. XXIV of 2009); and
- (b) The Additional Remuneration (No. 2) Bill (No. XXV of 2009).

B. Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment –

- (a) The Annual Report of the Financial Services Commission for the year 2009.
- (b) The Annual Report of the Financial Reporting Council for the year ended 30 June 2009 (In original).

C. Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands –

- (a) The Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes (General Rate) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 158 of 2009).
- (b) The Municipal Council of Curepipe (General Rate) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 159 of 2009).
- (c) The Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix (General Rate) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 160 of 2009).

D. Ministry of Health & Quality of Life –

The HIV and AIDS (Prescribed Institutions and Non Governmental Organisations) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 156 of 2009).

E. Ministry of Consumer Protection and Citizens Charter –

- (a) The Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 13) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 153 of 2009).
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 27) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 154 of 2009).
- (c) The Consumer Protection (Control of Imports) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 155 of 2009).
- (d) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-Taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 23) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 157 of 2009).

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as a sign of respect to our much regretted colleague and friend and in observance of the national mourning, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 18 December 2009 at 3.30 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 11.44 a.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 18 December 2009 at 3.30 p.m.