

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Wednesday, May 22, 2013*

The House met at 11.00 a.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**PRIME MINISTER AND GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO****(LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN)**

[Third Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [May 20, 2013]:**Be it resolved* that this House confirms its loss of confidence in the Prime Minister and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Dr. K. Rowley*]*Question again proposed.*

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Hon. Winston Dookeran): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this debate that has been engaging our attention for a prolonged period of time over the last three days.

Mr. Speaker, the subject matter before us has to do with the allegation that the Prime Minister and the Government of the Trinidad and Tobago have undermined key institutions of the State, namely the Judiciary, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the parliamentary Opposition and, indeed, the media.

I take this resolution, Mr. Speaker, in the context of our collective quest to protect our freedoms and, more specifically, to protect the institutional autonomy of those bodies that are responsible for protecting that freedom. And it is in this context, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments pertaining to the Motion before us, and to be able to see what are the lessons we can learn from it and what are the challenges that are indeed before us. To do so, I go back a little bit to the works of those who have looked at issues of this nature globally.

Recently, in 2012, two very distinguished authors, Mr. Daron Acemoglu and Mr. James A. Robinson from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, came together and produced what many think will be a path-breaking book on the subject of *Why Nations Fail*. That was indeed the title of the book, subtitled: *The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. The authors went into a long historical enquiry into these issues dating from the Roman Empire, moving into the Soviet Union, looking at issues in Latin America, England, the

United States, and indeed, the contemporary issues in Africa. Having examined that fundamental issue, they came to the succinct conclusion—and I just want to put this on the record—conclusively showed that it is man-made political and economic institutions that underlie economic success and went on to assert, Mr. Speaker, that all institutions, and I quote.

“...are created by society. Politics is the process by which a society chooses the rules that will govern it. When there is a conflict over institutions, what happens depends on which people or groups win out in the game of politics.”

I raise this as a preamble to my comments, for I believe the debate must not be taken frivolously, but I think the contents of the debate must be placed under scrutiny, and it is in that context that I said, any vote of no confidence in a Government based on the fact that it has undermined the institutions of the State is a serious allegation, for at the heart of it lies our quest to have a totally free society, and one in which our institutions can have Chinese walls between them, so as to protect the institutional autonomy that brings together the issue of freedom.

I say that, Mr. Speaker, because I have no doubt if one were to bring this before this honourable Chamber, then serious thought would have been gone into whether or not this Motion can stand the test of scrutiny that is required in our parliamentary system.

Of course, the underlying political objective is clearly one in which the two interpretations that have been laid before this country regarding the unfortunate events of section 34 have been: one based on a conspiracy theory, and the other where the Government having acted and acted promptly on an error in judgment and corrected it. I think it is on the record here in this Parliament and elsewhere that the Prime Minister, having acknowledged the circumstances that led to that particular matter, acted with promptness and haste to correct it. [*Desk thumping*]

There are some who persist that that connection was derived from a conspiracy and this Motion presumably is meant to perpetuate that claim.

11.10 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, in order to suggest that that in fact is so, the evidence that was brought before this honourable House has to do with the conversations that purportedly took place through the medium of emails between senior Members of this Government. I would not go into the details; it has been expressed—interpretations of that have been expressed frequently over the last three days.

But, I think in the end it really comes down to whether the evidence is evidence based on a conversation—whether through the emails or any other place—had taken place, and whether that conversation as reflected to this honourable House is authentic. That essentially is the issue.

If, indeed, it becomes authentic, what therefore are the consequences of it, or on the other hand, is it really bogus? Is it the work of those who want to perpetuate a public perception on section 34? Therefore, it has no validity. That essentially is what I sense the debate is all about.

I agree with the Member for St. Augustine when he said that either way there are consequences. When one brings such information to this honourable Chamber, one is fully cognizant of the fact that such information, if not correct, has consequences.

Mr. Roberts: Correct.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Therefore, I make the assumption, Mr. Speaker, that these considerations were well taken into place before one were to use three days of parliamentary debate to what I consider a debate on much to do about little. *[Laughter]* But, it has been brought and has been brought in the context on which I have just explained, and therefore it is important for us to adjudicate on the matter as a society. If, on one hand it is, in fact, bogus—and many of the Members who have spoken have put that case and have put themselves in a position to advocate that case—then clearly there are serious consequences. So either way, there are consequences and therefore we must get to the very truth of this situation.

What really is the subject matter? It is a conversation. It is a conversation that took place via the form of email. It is not an action that, in fact, purports to do the things which the Motion claims. It is a conversation—

Hon. Member: Good point!

Hon. W. Dookeran:—and it is a conversation sufficient in order to ascribe support to the claims. Even though the conversation may or may not be authentic—and I have not said whether it is or it is not—I want to make the point that this is a conversation. It is just as if you and I began to talk and you and I, Mr. Speaker, will say things to each other—does that constitute an attack on the institutions when there is nothing following that conversation that really undermines the very integrity of it? *[Desk thumping]* To me, that is the biggest flaw in the argument that has been laid before this House.

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So while we must indeed take steps to ascertain whether or not it is authentic or it is bogus, we must be able to recognize that the evidence of a conversation cannot be brought to an honourable House in the absence of action that undermines our institutions. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Exactly!

Hon. W. Dookeran: I believe it is the Member for Oropouche East who outlined that argument in a much more picturesque way than I can do it. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: Much more!

Hon. W. Dookeran: So the second question that has puzzled me and has troubled me as I looked at this resolution and listened to the contributions that have been made—and which was addressed by many Members—including those who have spoken so far: is Parliament the right place to make such a judgment? Clearly, we all recognize that that will not be so. Parliament, we know, is a place that conducts the people's business. Parliament is a place in which there is lot of political posturing. Parliament is a place that sometimes unearths political ambitions, but Parliament is not a place to seek truth on issues of national importance and controversy. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Very true! Very true!

Hon. W. Dookeran: So therefore the system that we have must have the basis to do that, and in our system, I believe the Prime Minister's immediate response—to have referred this to an institution, the Commissioner of Police, for investigation—is the most appropriate immediate response to these issues. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: Done!

Hon. W. Dookeran: So we must recognize the limitations of Parliament itself and we must also recognize that in bringing things to Parliament, there must be consequences. It is not a place to just talk without consequences.

Hon. Member: Correct!

Hon. W. Dookeran: You know, Mr. Speaker, on several occasions, you have been called to establish the rightness or the wrongness of the rules of procedure. So you recognize in your own discharge of the duty here that we must not use this occasion to be just completely frivolous. So I assume that the hon. Member for

Diego Martin West, who has the right to do what he has done and who has had the experience to understand the implications of what he has done—

Mr. Cadiz: Seriousness!

Hon. W. Dookeran:—understands the seriousness of the allegations, but our institutions must be able to handle the correctness of the response.

Mr. Speaker, what are the actions that have been identified, apart from the conversation, that undermine the institutions that have been outlined? What steps have we taken, or what decisions has this Government been involved in that undermine the Judiciary? I must say that I do not recollect in the three years of Government that the Cabinet in which I sit—or the Government in which I am part—has taken any deliberate action to undermine the Judiciary. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Cadiz: Not once!

11.20 a.m.

Hon. W. Dookeran: But, if we are to look at the evidence we must go beyond conversation into action. We cannot make a judgment on a conversation. We must make a judgment on the action. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, there has always been a creative tension between institutions. Do I have any information of a specific action that has been taken to deal with the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions? There have been disagreements. There have been different points of view, but the fundamental and cardinal principle of the independence of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has been honoured by this Government over that. [*Desk thumping*] And this is what and how a democracy works.

Unless I hear of any specific action that has been taken, not a purported conversation but an action, then I would have to consider this a serious, serious matter, for I would not, like most of my colleagues, allow us to sit collectively and undermine the independence of those institutions that protect our freedom. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the third area has to do with the parliamentary Opposition. I have never seen a freer parliamentary Opposition than I have seen operating in this last few years and I have enjoyed many of their contributions and they have influenced many of the decisions and they have participated constructively in the debates—[*Desk thumping*—and I do not see how we could have undermined the parliamentary Opposition that is made up of such men of freedom who hold close

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to them their freedom and we are about to undermine that. If I were able to do that I would not be here, I would be somewhere else. [*Desk thumping*] Where is the action to undermine the parliamentary Opposition? I would really like to know what is the basis for that action, if there is one at all.

And then, of course, the fourth area has to do with the media. The media is, perhaps, the most significant institution in the protection of democracy in Trinidad and Tobago. It is the instrument that creates public perception. It is the instrument that shapes public opinion and hopefully that perception and opinion may influence people in their political choices. So, it is no wonder that the media would always remain an institution of enormous strength in this country.

There is also a very fundamental conflict between the media and a government, not here but everywhere. When I look at *Why Nations Fail*, I see evidence of that in many countries that have reached even greater consequences, where governments try to curtail the freedom of the media. The governments pass laws to restrict the operation. We have been replete with examples of that throughout the world, in contemporary situations and elsewhere. So, Mr. Speaker, I do not know what steps or what action we have taken and I want to make the distinction between the conversations, alleged as they are, and the action that has been taken to undermine that freedom.

Recently, when the Prime Minister met with the International Press Association and agreed to remove certain provisions that will allow even more freedom, even in cases of libel—[*Desk thumping*—and freedom of the press, is that the direction that we are moving into? But tell me, what have we done legislatively, administratively or elsewhere to undermine that freedom?

So, Mr. Speaker, what we have is a Motion that is based on an alleged conversation. That itself is an important consideration and I agree with the Member for Diego Martin West. What it does, it touches the nerves of our very core values of government and I think this may be what has prompted him to accept verbatim the whistle-blower's interpretation of those events because it touches the very nerves of our core values of democracy, of the right of our institutions to operate in complete autonomy and freedom, especially in the protection of our liberties and, therefore, in the discharge of our political and governance responsibilities.

There are many things that one can legitimately bring to the public fore as issues of debate in public policy, but it does not seem to me that the Motion before us and the evidence that was adduced have identified those actions and I

agree—the conversation, even though it is a conversation, requires an assessment as to its veracity and I believe the first step is to do what the Prime Minister has done. We cannot leave it ignored. But I do not think that that step may be sufficient in our society.

When I look at this in a perspective of what is happening in many political institutions, I see emerging now a new phenomenon, perhaps not so new but a phenomenon that has now been placed squarely on the agenda of governance and this has to do with what has been roughly called cybercrime. Cybercrime is now squarely on the global agenda and the regional agenda. It is a different phenomenon. In our innocence, that was not there but we may have lost our virginity in 1990. Would we now lose our innocence in not addressing this issue of cybercrime? And that, to me, is how this Motion has to be located. Cybercrime has descended on the world and many, many matters are now being raised because of that issue.

Let me just put on record a very brief description of what is cybercrime.

11.30 a.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Rowley’s emails is cybercrime.” Rowley’s emails.

Hon. W. Dookeran: We categorize computer crimes in three ways according to this document which defines cybercrime. What is cybercrime?

- “(1) The computer as a target - attacking the computers of others...
- (2) The computer as a weapon - using a computer to commit ‘traditional crime’ that we see in the physical world...
- (3) The computer as an accessory - using a computer as a ‘fancy filing cabinet’ to store illegal or stolen information.”

In a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, that is the subject matter in which this particular debate might be placed. If there are lessons to be learnt from it, it will be how we deal with that issue.

It is no doubt that the computer and the Internet have become indispensable tools for progress. I want to quote from a recent publication on this issue done by the Organization of American States, based on a report on cybersecurity. It states and I quote:

“Unfortunately, the Internet has also spawned new threats that endanger the entire global community of Internet users. Information that transits the Internet can be misappropriated and manipulated to invade users’ privacy and defraud businesses. The destruction of data that reside on computers linked by

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the Internet can stymie government functions and disrupt public telecommunications service and other critical infrastructures. Such threats to our citizens, economies, and essential services...cannot be addressed by a single government or combated using a solitary discipline or practice.”

In other words, Mr. Speaker, if there is something that we must learn, is whether we are equipped to that new phenomenon, and the very report of which I just quoted identified what was happening in other jurisdictions. Let me just put on the record in order to establish that this is not a matter of theory.

The report makes an assessment of cybercrime trends in Chile, in Colombia, in Jamaica, in Mexico, in Panama. It says with respect to cybercrime trends in Jamaica:

“The Jamaican government reported a 14 % increase in the number of cyber incidents in 2012, which most often targeted public institutions.”

With respect to Mexico:

“Mexican authorities registered a 40 % increase in the number of cyber incidents in 2012, largely due to hacktivist attacks.”

The same story is reflected in Panama and elsewhere. So it is a real situation.

It is something that has been placed on the agenda of several security meetings, and has recently, as last few months when the Prime Minister and myself attended the Caricom Heads of Government Meeting in Haiti, and Trinidad and Tobago through its Prime Minister announced a 14-point plan for regional security, which was unanimously approved by the Caribbean Heads of Government. [*Desk thumping*] One of the issues in that had to do with how we are going to approach the new threat of cybercrimes. So, it is on the agenda.

Recently, we had a meeting in Trinidad and Tobago of the mission heads of the Trinidad and Tobago missions abroad, and we identified the challenges facing us. I want to quote from the report of that meeting—the meeting of the heads of missions that was held in Trinidad and Tobago in May—I think it was April 2013. And I quote:

The Internet has on one hand unleashed new energies in our society and, on the other, fostered the atmosphere of great impatience and cynicism. This is a challenge that all of us must deal with, so that we can socially and politically sustain an environment conducive to improved economic growth and positive use of the Internet.

It is therefore recognized, Mr. Speaker, that we are in a new age and this new age affects governance; it affects how we conduct our business. This matter

assumed great proportions recently on the international stage, when it was alleged that sensitive data was being revealed to the world from the US security agencies, and that culminated eventually in a stand-off between Ecuador and the United Kingdom.

Some of us may remember the public outcry in the world because of what they call “leaks” of a sensitive nature. The stand-off became acute and real and the Governments involved took strong positions on the so-called perpetrators. The matter remains the best and most recent articulation of how issues on cybercrime, or alleged cybercrimes, could eventually enter into the world of diplomacy and affect relations between countries. I use that if only to establish the fact that the phenomenon in which we are involved is a phenomenon that we must indeed address.

If what is before us today is but one articulation of that phenomenon, let it be used not only to clarify the authenticity or, in fact, the bogusness of the allegations, but also to part a road path for the future, because if it comes into this Parliament today, it will come into the parliaments of tomorrow.

Hon. Member: That is right, no question about that.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Therefore, we must be prepared to deal with that. It is a new age of cybercrimes and cybersecurity. How do we address it?

In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker, there has been some response. I am advised that already there is some nucleus of a unit within the Ministry of National Security whose remit and mandate is to look into these issues that are now on the agenda.

11.40 a.m.

In the addition to that, we have included it in our bilateral discussions especially with those countries that provide support in the area of security, that we need the necessary competence and expertise in order to handle this in the future and, hopefully—although that specific matter will not be raised—the general issue of support for security collaboration between the United States and Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean will be an item for discussion at the impending visit of the US Vice-President to our shores.

On that score, Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat amazed and astonished by my colleague and friend from Point Fortin, in her aspersions that she expressed with respect to the foreign image of Trinidad and Tobago. For us and for me, we build a foreign image on hard and concrete relationships, not on political embraces.

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[*Desk thumping*] It is not the image that matters, it is the substance of it and I think the Member for Point Fortin, in her contribution, made some relatively wild accusations.

And I think I should just spend a few moments to establish the rightness or the wrongness of her assertions. [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*] I respect every Member of the Opposition. I do personally and publicly, and that is why I sought a *Hansard* copy of what the Member for Point Fortin said, so I do not mislead myself. I mean, if the Leader of the Opposition allowed himself to be misled by a whistleblower, I will not mislead myself here today. [*Desk thumping*] This is what the Member said:

“...I want to say to you that this Prime Minister has presided over the lowest diplomatic standings that this country has ever held regionally and internationally. That is what they have brought the image of this country to, the lowest standard ever, rock bottom.”

I could not believe that a Member of the Parliament of a sovereign country like Trinidad and Tobago, also one who was a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, could make such an indictment on her own stewardship. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] I could not believe that.

Hon. Member: Unbelievable.

Hon. W. Dookeran: And then she went on, Mr. Speaker—the Member, sorry, for Point Fortin, went on to say that the population is getting fed up with what they see as political posturing. I wonder if it was on a mission of what she was in fact doing in this Parliament.

The Member went on further to argue that our absence in the ACS meeting recently in Haiti and the Prime Minister’s absence in that meeting—and including myself as Minister of Foreign Affairs—was an indication of our lack of interest. Little did she understand that there were conflicting schedules, that the Prime Minister was on an official state visit to Canada at the time and I was called upon to attend a meeting of the Commonwealth, important as it is, because it had to deal with the issue of the next CHOGM.

We sent a Minister, the hon. Minister of Tourism, who came back with a lot of information, contrary to what you said. If all the tourists go to a country and come back with the information he has done, then there is evidence of a walk-in Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

When the Minister returned, we had a long discussion on what took place at that meeting and he told me that the proposal of Trinidad and Tobago—which was to include in the declaration of the ACS a clause calling for support for what I

have been calling Caribbean Convergence—was included in the declaration. It was a Trinidad and Tobago intervention at that meeting even without us and, with the Minister being there, he did not have to say it, it was in the documents already. So I do not know how you can make, Member for Point Fortin, such wild statements in this Parliament and expect not to be treated with frivolity. [*Crosstalk*] I urge myself never to treat any comment with frivolity, but, you see, the Member for Diego Martin—

Hon. Member: Point Fortin.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Well, sorry, the Member for Point Fortin is not doing her homework at this time.

She made mention, and I quote:

“...I am showing how they have absolutely no interest in representing this country properly, and at...PetroCaribe meeting which the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs should have gone to because we wanted to strike a renewed relationship with the new President, so...we can in fact monetize the resources that are between the two countries. So that would have been an”—interesting—“meeting, but he chose not to attend.”

Mr. Speaker, is the Minister aware that her own Government, during her time, never signed up to the cooperation agreement for PetroCaribe? Is the Minister aware of that major issue?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I am not a Minister.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Is the Member aware, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, that the former Prime Minister, the hon. Patrick Manning, had explained this to me—that while we had a watchful brief of that situation, we were not going to be pulled into a formal agreement. Now she is saying we ought to have been there regardless of the old agreement that their Government had put into place and which we have not deviated from; except we have done one thing, we did attend the meeting, but not at the level of Minister. We attended the meeting at the level of the Charge D’Affaires of the embassy in Caracas, our embassy in Caracas, and that was on the instruction of the hon. Prime Minister whether this question would come up. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Member of Parliament for Tunapuna has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. A. Roberts*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. W. Dookeran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and may I thank my colleagues for this extension.

Mr. Speaker, let me just, very briefly, allay this country of the accusations that have been levied on the conduct of our foreign policy and, more specifically, on our international image, that has been made by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Member: That one.

11.50 a.m.

Hon. W. Dookeran: In addition to what I have said so far, we have been able to establish, at the United Nations, a formidable record. I will not go into all the details here—it is out in the public domain—but let me make reference to two issues that were, in fact, raised.

When the Prime Minister addressed the General Assembly in her very first year in office, she introduced two new resolutions under the name of Trinidad and Tobago: one had to do, Mr. Speaker, with the issue of the non-proliferation of weapons and the involvement of women. I will get the name in a minute; the exact name—Women, Disarmament and Non-proliferation and Arms Control. It was a new initiative. It was an attempt to draw civic society in the fight for non-proliferation and arms control.

I am pleased to inform this honourable House that after substantial debate and very delicate negotiations on the part of our officials in the New York Consulate that that Motion eventually was approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations. [*Desk thumping*]

And further, Mr. Speaker, a Motion dealing with arms trade control was on the agenda. Trinidad and Tobago gave strong support to it. The Prime Minister had raised it and expressed her political support for it. After two years of very delicate discussions we were able to get the approval—again, because of the hard work and negotiations of our officials in New York.

Let me take this opportunity to acknowledge their contribution [*Desk thumping*] in the development of the public image of Trinidad and Tobago—Ambassador Eden Thompson and Ambassador Rodney Charles, and in my own local Ministry, Ambassador Gerald Thompson. So much so, that the Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom called me, personally, to express his appreciation for the professional work that have been done by Trinidad and Tobago diplomats in that mission. [*Desk thumping*]

When I met with the foreign minister of Australia in London, he too came up to me—because they were one of the co-sponsors—and acknowledged the work of our ambassadors in building the international image. This resulted, eventually, in a visit by the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations here in Trinidad. He chose to come to Trinidad and Tobago in order to acknowledge the leadership that Trinidad and Tobago has been taking in the United Nations in New York [*Desk thumping*] and he spent two days with us.

And follow that up with a subsequent high-level meeting by a committee of the Security Council called the 1540 Committee, which had to do with preparing the country in the event of chemical explosions, and we recognize that Trinidad and Tobago is susceptible to those possibilities. Where, therefore, Mr. Speaker, is the basis for the argument that we have reached rock bottom low?

In the last week, albeit in the Caricom region, we met. The Foreign Minister of New Zealand, the Foreign Minister of Dominican Republic, the Foreign Minister of Brazil, the envoy to Japan and one other foreign minister—I would remember in a minute—who came to Trinidad and Tobago. Next week we shall be hosting the Vice-President of the United States [*Desk thumping*] and, subsequently, I know it is public information but we will do it properly, when we have even heads of state coming here.

Trinidad and Tobago has become an attractive diplomatic hub for diplomacy in the region and in Latin America. [*Desk thumping*] I do not discredit the foundation that you may have laid, but I worked well on it and built it beyond your expectation. [*Desk thumping*] And, therefore, it is unfortunate that you will come in this callous and frivolous way and make such frivolous statements in order to be self-serving in a Motion that has very little merit in this House.

Mr. Roberts: And you will not hug him.

Hon. Member: “Ohoooo!” [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Sharma: “Oh God! Go and bathe, go and bathe and come back.”

Hon. W. Dookeran: Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on, but I do not wish to go—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I draw his attention.

Hon. W. Dookeran:—in any great detail—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, Members. Please, please. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. W. Dookeran:—on these issues, but I must raise one issue, and that has to do with Caricom and the integration movement. Let me inform, through you Mr. Speaker, the honourable House that we are conscious of the challenges facing

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the Caribbean region. Not only have we been able to provide extensive support to the challenges facing the Caribbean with respect to the closure of Clico and BAT—British American Insurance Company—but Trinidad and Tobago provided substantial support to the region.

We have been able to introduce for discussion what we call a new frontier for Caribbean convergence.

Dr. Moonilal: Take that!

Hon. W. Dookeran: Sooner or later you will have these matters raised before us. In other words, our interest is to get the content of the agenda substantial. We know the problems in the region, but we have to deal with that. So I want to simply—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please Members for Point Fortin and Mayaro, please.

Mr. Peters: Me?

Hon. W. Dookeran: Member for Point Fortin, I want to say that the baselessness of those allegations should not be made so loosely and so lightly. I am happy that I was here to hear it myself, and you did speak to me as well, but not in the language you have expressed here today. But, be that as it may, in the cut and thrust of debates there are excesses that are allowable, Mr. Speaker. You allow it so often, so I allow her excesses without any animosity whatsoever.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me go back to the fundamental Motion before us, and to reiterate very clearly and without ambiguity that the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Diego Martin West, was quite right and appropriate in using this Parliament to question the scrutiny of this Government on the issues [*Desk thumping*] of public institutions. In my view, he used some conversations and alleged conversations to do so, but did not support any action that I could think of and, perhaps, you will.

I say that because I am now involved in so many conflicts that are taking place elsewhere, and it is all based on action by the Executive on the Judiciary; it is all based on action by the Executive on the media; it is all based on all those actions that have been taken on the parliamentary Opposition and on candidates for election. That is action that you hear all over the world and you see on your television. There is no such action in Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] that has taken place. [*Desk thumping*] That is why I asked the Member for Diego Martin West to make the distinction between a conversation which must be investigated and must ascertain the truth, and we must find the right mechanism to do so transparently. We must have the competence to handle it.

We must reassure the country in the way we handle these allegations that there is no merit and no basis for those allegations. If we leave it in doubt and if we leave it as a matter that will soon get out of the front pages, we will be doing ourselves and our future generation a great disservice. So I agree with the call that has been made by the Prime Minister to send this to the Commissioner of Police for investigation, but I think we must monitor that and ensure that they have the competence to handle that situation.

12.00 noon

In light of what I have said this is part of a new phenomenon, a new age of cybercrimes, and, perhaps, this is our first parliamentary exposé of such a crime. But, Mr. Speaker, I do agree that it is important for us to get to the heart of it, and I support the Member for St. Augustine when he said we must in fact do it—and other Members. I have never heard anyone on this side of the bench who has not said that we must get to the root of this issue.

It is important for the very values of our democracy, for at the heart of this is an attack on the Government's adherence to the fundamental spirit of the values of democracy. That is what this debate is all about, and I look forward to this Parliament playing its part, along with the other institutions of Government in a dispassionate way to come to that reality and to establish once and for all that no Government in Trinidad and Tobago would in any way find themselves violating the fundamental spirit of our democracy and our freedom in our country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Errol Mc Leod): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after the very illustrious contributions, I should be taking very little time because I considered this debate to have concluded since—was it yesterday?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: In that there was nothing brought here by the Members opposite that convinces anybody that they were about serious business, even the serious business about landing themselves in the seat of power. While this exercise perhaps attests to the practice of our democracy, I am of the view that this arduous exercise really is one that is premised on misinformation, misrepresentation and, indeed, mischief in the most abject sense. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: Sad day.

Hon. E. McLeod: I am not going to spend any time on the examination of emails and the cut and paste that has been presented here as I want to respond to some of the other statements, some of them fundamental, that were made by the presenters of this mischievous Motion.

The Member for Diego Martin West presented to us examples of certain other leaders in the world, among whom one Enoch Powell was identified. Mr. Speaker, I think that it is an insult to the people of Trinidad and Tobago for any one of us to identify Enoch Powell as any example, in any sphere of activity that we should copy, that we should want to follow.

Enoch Powell or John Enoch Powell was one of Britain's biggest expressed racists. He was a separatist of great magnitude. Mr. Speaker, Enoch Powell spoke about the rivers of blood that would follow the inclusion of so many other non-white people populating the United Kingdom, and he was very much opposed to it. Of course, Margaret Thatcher identified him—I think it was in 1995—as Britain's greatest parliamentarian. Now, obviously, she would have had reasons for saying that.

Mr. Powell sparked massive controversy in Britain, and the controversies that he sparked certainly caused his immediate dismissal as a then shadow Cabinet member. One of his speeches under the collection entitled, *Rivers of Blood*, he predicted in 1968 race wars in United Kingdom as a result of the then current immigration policy that was pursued by the Government of the United Kingdom. And he was talking in terms of race riots similar to that occurring in the United States at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan, and against which persons whom we might want to use as an example, Martin Luther King for instance. Martin Luther King had faced tremendous opposition and serious struggles as he sought to bring people together and to unite the different factions, divided by race of course, in the United States of America.

One could have identified, but I understand why one did not identify, Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, head of the Inkatha Movement in South Africa. Mr. Speaker, the protagonists identified by the other side, the examples that were drawn could well have those examples connected to one who was a separatist but in a different way, a totally different way, and who would have identified—he boasted even about his great ability, his great political achievement. And one might want to go to page 310, 311, in a famous book, *Inward Hunger*, to find out what I am pointing to.

That boast identified a political achievement, such as an ability to keep the workers in oil and the workers in sugar apart. Now when we examine that we see who are the workers in oil—who were the workers in oil, because the situation has changed now. There is greater integration of our people in all of our industrial sectors. So that one could have identified who was being spoken about, in oil and in sugar. The importance of instituting the Industrial Stabilization Act, which the workers themselves destroyed, so much so that the Industrial Relations Act was brought into being.

12.10 p.m.

I am pointing to efforts by the other side, in earlier incarnations, to undermine people's institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. "So doh come here today and charge this Government with undermining the Judiciary and the police, and the Opposition even." I mean, who could do it better than the Opposition itself? [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well said.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: There were always attempts at dividing the people on the basis that, as we keep them divided, particular political sections of the national community would continue to exercise power in this society. They are desperate, and they will go to any length to reorganize and reinstitute themselves, but we must keep the doors shut against them forever. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: The door is already shut.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Notwithstanding that, I want to recommit my assistance to the hon. Member for La Brea to ensure that his constituency is so properly represented that the bridge about which he spoke is going to be built. [*Desk thumping*] I will see after the Bull Bull Bridge in Pointe-a-Pierre, as I would see after the bridge in your constituency, and then I shall make the kind of representation that will have my efforts identified as representing two constituencies. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

It had always been an attempt against the working class. It has always been. We must remember the bus workers' strike in 1964. Who did that? We must remember the bus workers striking again in 1969. In 1964, 200 of them were arrested and charged—ordinary people. Mr. Speaker, 1969, many of the workers and some prominent leaders had serious atrocities committed against them.

I remember the BWIA airline pilots. I had been a Member of the Parliament 1976—1981, and in 1978 this country had to deal with action taken by airline pilots and the reaction perpetrated against them by the political administration. I sat in the Parliament and heard the personal medical records of Captain

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Hernandez being read out, and one could have seen the pain on the face of the government Minister who was instructed by Pharoah. “Yuh know who dey call Pharoah then”? And Pharoah would be deaf whenever he did not want to hear you. The Minister was instructed to present the medical records of the captain to the Parliament and, by extension, the country.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Confidential records.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: The airline pilots went to court and a number of them were dismissed. They went to court and the court ruled in favour of some of them. So incensed was the political directorate that the court was segregated. You had one all-purposes court divided into two sections: general purposes and essential services division. Who was undermining what? That is not the end of it. That is not the end of it.

In October 1971, some 22 activists and trade unions leaders were taken in. They were incarcerated, and remained incarcerated until sometime in April of 1972, during which time the move was being made—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Point Fortin, I am hearing your voice very plainly while the Member is speaking. I will ask you to do it in undertones. Right now you are in overtones; I am hearing you.

Mr. Indarsingh: Do not go in overdrive. From overtones do not move to overdrive.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: The move was being made to repeal the ISA that the workers had destroyed and have it replaced by the IRA. These people had to remain incarcerated to facilitate a smooth introduction of the IRA. I am sure that hon. Members would remember that Carnival was threatened, and there were claims that we had an epidemic developing in the country and that we should not be congregating in large numbers. [*Interruption*] 1972, 1973.

Hon. Member: Mas in May.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: “Yeah.” They were inoculating the incarcerated persons. I know one person who I understand refused to be inoculated. He did not trust them. He did not trust them. You see, it is important that we go back to a number of important occurrences in our short history; ours is no long history. If we are going to deal with trust, we have to go back to the earlier incidents when trust would have been destroyed by those who are now making complaints about how the public feels about this Government.

12.20 p.m.

It was on the basis of the people not trusting them that we won the election 29 to 12 in 2010. [*Desk thumping*] But there has been so much cleaning up that one had to do. We would have spent so much time cleaning up and others who did have any work to do had all of the time for the devil to manipulate idle hands who would have been spreading mischief around town.

The charge? Corruption. Mr. Speaker, we must be reminded about the early days of corruption in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Cadiz: Uh-hmm. Lock Joint.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Do you remember the car loan racket? That was 1960.

Hon. Member: “Ah eh born yet. Tell meh more.”

Hon. E. Mc Leod: “Eh.” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Lock Joint scandal. The DC9 scandal. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Yeah. The DC9 scandal [*Crosstalk*] Tesoro—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Gas station.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: And as I mention Tesoro, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Jean Miles.

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—you know, there is a person posing as a chairman of sorts of a political organization, but I would not call by name, a political party perhaps with great history in this country. [*Crosstalk*] I recall that person, well I always identified him as the grinning gargoyle.

Hon. Member: “Jeezanages.” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. E. Mc Leod: That person left Trintopec—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: What!

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—with a number of geological maps, Mr. Speaker, the geological map identifies where the oil can be found—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: That is a treasure map.

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—and it was at a time when the company was farming out those acreages that they found to be below an acceptable level of production, and the lower the production, the higher the cost is to produce, so that they were farming out to every little oil pedlar who could afford to take an acreage or two. This person went with the geological maps over which he would have had

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jurisdiction while he held a position, a managerial position, in the company, and he was found out afterwards—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: They call him Chin.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: [*Laughs*]—to have been engaged in other mischief, but I do not know where that might be.

Mr. Cadiz: He is what now?

Hon. E. Mc Leod: He is a chairman.

Dr. Moonilal: Chairman Chin.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: The grinning gargoyle. They want to tell anybody about corruption?

Mr. Sharma: Shameless.

Hon. Member: Sell out the country to him.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Huh huh. Tesoro, Mr. Speaker, came here after BP in an earlier incarnation, determined that there was very little left in Trinidad for them to exploit. They were moving to the North Sea, Mr. Speaker, and workers were retrenched. “If yuh closing down the thing, I mean what do you do with the workers?” Workers were retrenched. The political directorate was prevailed upon to have the State engaged in the assets that BP was going away from. But the multinational corporation, Mr. Speaker, even when it has sucked you like the juice from an orange, it does not just throw the stuff away. They must be paid for that too.

Hon. Member: Nooo.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: “Yuh pay for them to come and yuh pay for them to go.” That is it, Mr. Speaker, all over the world, it is not just Trinidad and Tobago. So that BP had a deal with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago that their assets will be purchased for \$44 million.

Hon. Member: In those days.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: In those days US \$44 million. Yeah. That was small money. That was small money for BP, but big money for Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Member: Where the budget was \$1 billion.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: And the arrangement was that they will be paid \$22 million of that in cash, and they will be supplied with crude oil, representing over a period of time, the remaining \$22 million. That was the arrangement, but we

did not have the confidence in ourselves, or so the political directorate thought. We needed somebody of some international acclaim to help us with this thing. And little known Tesoro Corporation was invited to come here, and you know what they paid for 49 per cent of our \$44 million enterprise? They paid US \$50,000.

Dr. Moonilal: What!

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Yes! [*Crosstalk*] Yes!

Hon. Member: I remember that. That was a steal.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: And when they were leaving it was on the conclusion of an agreement that they will be paid \$480 million to go.

Hon. Member: My Lord. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Yeah.

Hon. Member: Who did that?

Hon. E. Mc Leod: “Yuh understand?” Now, People’s Partnership was not even thought about at that time. We were not born yet. Who was in power? Who was in authority? Who was representing the interest of Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Member: Who sell out the people?

Mr. Cadiz: O’Halloran.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: It is not easy, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] And it is the people who pay all of the time.

Hon. Member: “Gawd.”

Hon. E. Mc Leod: And the lower you are on the economic ladder is the more you are indebted. We say that to the workers all the time. Yeah. “Yuh cuss out the management, mismanagement, corruption, they are stealing before your eyes.” Yeah. And because of the way the thing is organized you go and tell the workers, we have to struggle on this you know, but you must know that it is a struggle about which you have to be forever vigilant. And you measure the steps that you are going to take, and each time you do a review of your situation and determine sometimes “yuh” take a step or two backward so that you can leap three or four forward.

12.30 p.m.

You see, a number of us, Mr. Speaker—“we read book buh we doh take time to understand chapter”. The corruption with GTL, gas to liquids, who is paying for that?

Mr. Roberts: We.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: A technology that had hardly been tried, but we had money and they had power so they could experiment with the lives of the people and the sustainability of the industry that is struggling, really, to keep on par with its mandate and we are accused. “I not taking that. I not taking that at all.” Not from them!

It has always been, Mr. Speaker—I guess it has to do with the sense in which you say it— a case of workers and their unions finding it easier, and it is being examined, to amass large numbers of people to demonstrate against any Government that is non-PNM. You see, there are workers who will subscribe all of the time to the trade union appeal, and there are workers who are influenced—and leaders too—by PNM appeal. Whoever is in power, there are particular workers, once they understand the issue and they are for justice, they will come out and demonstrate, and there are others who will take the position—I heard with these two big ears I have here [*Holds ears*] a trade union leader then saying I am not going to bring my workers out in that because it is against my party and Government, and they were the office; they were in power. I would not call the name of the person.

Hon. Member: People getting sell out all the time.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Sell out. Sell out all the time.

Mr. Sharma: PNM track style.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: And anybody who sits down and considers the travails of workers in this country, post-independence, will not be just reluctant; will swear against giving life and giving strength to a dismantled PNM. One has to be like the dustbin terrier that will go and consume its own vomit, but it seems that we have some budding dustbin terriers around these days, at least so they claim that they have the support of this one, that one and the other one.

Mr. Speaker, I did say that I am not like my illustrious colleagues, able to deal with the email from the very technical perspective that they attach to it, and therefore I will not want to dwell on that. But it amazed me that I am not the only techno-moron in this place. [*Laughter*] When I listened to the other side I realized that—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: You have company. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—something as—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Not only fabricators but techno-morons. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Mr. Speaker, there is a mongrel, you know. But there is one next door by me I called it lergnom, M-O-N-G-R-E-L spelt backwards. *[Interruption]* The only two Rottweilers that I have are the only two Rottweilers on the street where I live, and in the La Brea constituency, and they take instructions, “eh”. They take instructions, and they will not run out of the gate widely chasing after every van or old jitney that “pass”. Yeah

Hon. Member: Old jitney.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Barking at every car.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Barking at every car.

Hon. Member: When it stops they “eh” know what to do.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: *[Laughs]* So, Mr. Speaker, this is the fourth Motion brought here. The first being on March 02, 2012 and then the second one on October 26, 2012; am I correct? “Yep”. And then April 26—the second was October 26, 2012, yeah—*[Interruption]*—okay, and April 26, yes.

Mr. Speaker, I am therefore not expecting that this one, and it is already written, you see, that this one would have any result that is different in terms of the vote that will be taken. This one would have no different result from those that went before—the three that went before. But our handling of this one, I find it to have been a more fundamental approach, a more thoroughgoing approach, an approach that is with genius—did somebody say that? And I must compliment the contributors on this side who have stood up in serious defence of the integrity of the institutions that we have in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]*

I want, Mr. Speaker, therefore, to maintain that Government's overall performance, and not the utterances of those on the other side, will be the ultimate arbiter of this Government's fate. In the three years since the People's Partnership Government came to office, the journey to rescue our country from the scourge of corruption and the near comatose state of our socio-economic well-being has been fraught with challenges that sometimes seem insurmountable.

12.40 p.m.

This Government, however, is aware that building our fortunes, indeed, nation building is not a one-day effort. It cannot be. It is a daily journey that requires commitment, the commitment of individuals and all of us being brought together as a collective—as we demonstrate our love for country, a love that goes beyond an obsession as had been spoken about, an obsession with office and with power. To some, they just want office “eh”, and they do not understand the fundamentals of power, and they sometimes engage in a measure of adventurism which, if not curbed, will put all of us in serious difficulties.

[HON. E. MC LEOD]

The Members on the other side speak about accountability, transparency, public affairs as though it is an option and not an imperative when one is put in a position to serve the public. If they forget, Mr. Speaker, I will gently remind them that the public has not forgotten, except for those three or four instances of corruption that I mentioned, but there are more recent ones that the public has not forgotten.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Emanating from them.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Of course. The epic scandal that was the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: Ah-ha.

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—under Calder Hart. Calder Hart, who did not hold—well, who was not elected to any office, did not hold any executive authority outside of the corporation over which he was made—is it Chairman or Executive Director?

Hon. Member: Everything, both.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Yeah. But Calder Hart was in a position of authority entrusted to him that allowed him to talk down, to disregard, to instruct even, Members of the Cabinet, then.

You know, I recall another incidence of malfeasance. I do not remember specifically what year that was, but a Minister of Home Affairs went to the jail, opened the gate and extricated his stepson.

Mr. Roberts: 1967 or thereabout.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: 1967. That was bad enough, Mr. Speaker, and one would expect that anybody doing that would be sanctioned. Instead, there was the arrogance and the contempt with which one said, if I say that he is going to be Minister of External Affairs and you do not like it, jump in the sea. And who, Mr. Speaker, came to the Parliament with any no confidence Motion. There was a Lord above all else, and if the Lord said this, then whether you are a dalmatian, great dane, pompek, or ordinary dustbin terrier “cyar say ah boo”. That is our experience.

So Mr. Calder Hart was able to bestride this land as the colonial Governors would have done at an earlier time in our history. Who forgets the Clico/HCU fiasco under the watch of then Minister of Finance—is it parliamentary for me to mention her name, Mr. Speaker? *[Mr. Speaker nods head]*

One Karen Nunez-Tesheira.

Mr. Roberts: Ohhh, God.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: And that is just the other day.

Mr. Roberts: Bail out her money.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Just the other day—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: In a nightie.

Dr. Gopeesingh: In a nightie and curlers.

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—and because of her position of power and authority extended by somebody else of greater power and authority, was able to get her funds out and the funds of immediate family, and there were others who were labouring in the vineyard I understand—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, yes.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: And who were denied, indeed, instructed against approaching the institution for their own money.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Present company excluded.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: A little bit again, we would have had to pass around a hat to make a little collection for people “eh”.

Dr. Moonilal: Douglas hat.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Hmmm. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Member for Pointe-a-Pierre) has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. P. Ramadhar*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much colleagues. So, Mr. Speaker, there was that incident, and there was also our identification of the Heights of Guanapo church being constructed—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh:—as an addendum to the Diplomatic Centre.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: As an addendum to the Diplomatic Centre. Thank you very much, Member for Caroni East. We seem to have little difficulty identifying who was project manager, who was Prime Minister—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Who was both.

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—who was both. We—I guess it has to do with our extending goodwill and love and respect for one another. I know that it is not reciprocated, but I try to extend that, so much so that we sometimes fail to

[HON. E. MC LEOD]

mention the role that some of us would have played, whether it had to do with the \$45 million scholarship programme or an attempt now, today, to award a retired or is it retiring politician of a level I think that is slightly below that of our Cabinet Ministers here in Trinidad and Tobago—yes?—award that retiring politician, secretary of finance, a \$60,000 per month position which is essentially a position from which he had just retired.

12.50 p.m.

Something has to be wrong about that! And people get angry with you when you make mention of this. And there are those who perhaps do not understand, when we were admonished and had suggested to us that you must remove—I know it as “yampi”; remove the “yampi” from your eye before you point out that which might be in another’s.

The \$2 million flag—and if removing the—is it the mote?

Hon. Member: The mote.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: So I knew more than “yampi”. They tell you—I mean, you do not just go throwing stones if you live in a glass house yourself. I mean, the country certainly was traumatized when a Prime Minister gets up in the Parliament and points to one of his former colleagues in the Government—

Mr. Ramadhar: I was here. I see that—

Hon. E. Mc Leod:—asking, “wey de money gone? Tell meh wey de money gone?” I mean, that is something else.

Hon. Member: He ever found out?

Mr. Cadiz: He brought a Motion at that time.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Where the money gone? And then, where the material for the hospital gone?

Mr. Ramadhar: “Yuh cah pelt stones if yuh live in glass house.”

Hon. E. Mc Leod: That is not to say that if one has evidence of wrongdoing, that one should remain mute about it. I am not saying that. But your case must be well-founded and not be on shifting sand, such as we saw in this particular instance.

Mr. Speaker, there is another story about a former Minister influencing the award of a \$4.1 million CEPEP contract to a very close family. And yet another Minister—another former Minister—hoping that we will forget the \$60 million housing contracts given to the wife of the grinning gargoyle.

Remember, Mr. Speaker—and I am talking about small organizations that have been adversely affected by some of the—by the modus operandi of some people who now want to point fingers.

Remember First National Credit Union? First National Credit Union, Mr. Speaker, is on the brink of collapse. A former Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs took \$19 million out of that credit union—not repaid. I do not want to say too much on this one because, as you might be aware, Mr. Speaker—as you are aware, Mr. Speaker—the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development has jurisdiction, such that issues affecting the credit unions, until the law is changed, come to the Minister on the basis of appeals and so on, and I anticipate that what has happened in HCU is happening—has happened—at a lower scale with certain other credit unions.

Mr. Speaker, if we spend time identifying the growth of small people in this country, we would see the very close relationship between such growth of small people and the growth of the credit union, the cooperative movement. In many ways the credit union and the cooperative movement have had nexus with the trade unions, and there is always some “smart man” who did not struggle to give birth and life to this thing, coming and taking the money out. “Yuh know?”

Then, Mr. Speaker, there is the \$174,000 spent via credit card overdraft by a former Minister of Planning, and then, more recently, a diplomatic representative of this country, in Canada. And they want to say how the rules of behaviour must be set.

Mr. Speaker, I am amazed that one would come here without foundation for one’s story and accuse this administration of—is it wiretapping you call it?—tapping your phone and so on. I happen to have had my phones tapped. The office which I occupied when I was in an earlier incarnation of leadership, I had two phones on my desk, one a direct line and the other one went through the general system in the office, and those phones were tapped. I was aware that my cellphone calls were intercepted. I “eh make no noise about it”. I just knew what I could say and what I should not say—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: And what you should say.

Hon. E. McLeod:—on my phones. So much so that there were times when I would detect that the listeners were in, and I will say particular stories which I know they could not carry home. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker, I thought that I might identify—I think enough of the scandals have been identified. I mean, you had—

Mr. Ramadhar: The tip of the iceberg, but you make your point.

1.00 p.m.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Yeah. There was the race track that was supposed to have been developed.

Mr. Ramadhar: Wallace.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: You know. Ha, ha, ha. I was a Member of the Parliament when we organized a campaign that called for houses before horses. I have been here for some time you know, Mr, Speaker.

Mr. Sharma: You do not look it.

Hon. Member: Looking good.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: “I eh no spring chicken.” I am told that I do not look it. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Cadiz: “Yuh not old, you born”—

Hon. Member: Young mind. [*Laughter*]

Hon. E. Mc Leod: You know, one can talk about the Milshirv thing in Tobago, but perhaps, I need to leave some things for other colleagues, if they are going to jump in the fray, to talk about. I thought, however, Mr. Speaker, that I should take the opportunity to just mention one more thing.

Mr. Speaker, when I came to office May 28, following the elections of the 24th, I asked for the most up-to-date information on happenings in the Ministry. I mean I have been for 21 years, the leader of an important trade union and I would have been at the Ministry of Labour in the conciliation facilities quite regularly. I knew all officers and so on. But that is all I knew about the Ministry of Labour. So I had to learn the other aspects of the Ministry of Labour and I asked for the most up-to-date reports on what was happening and so on. I examined the case of three unions being subjected to injunctive measures taken out against them: the Communication Workers Union, Transport and Industrial Workers Union and the—people at the airport, “nah”—flight—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: ACAWU.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Yeah, but there is a section there that people who manage the flights and so on. I will remember. You know, at 59, you do not remember things that you might have remembered when you were 29.

Mr. Indarsingh: Air traffic controllers.

Hon. E. McLeod: Thank you very much. There was an injunction against them too and these were injunctive measures that were pursued in 2009. These measures were deemed to be the precursor to moves to have them decertified. I examined the files and I immediately instructed the legal unit of the Ministry to go back to the Industrial Court and have these measures discharged.

You could not be talking freedoms and rights, such as have been mentioned to us here, and with sometimes the most frivolous of reasons, you take measures against workers and their unions, some of the very unions whose leaders are today lending a shoulder for certain political personalities to lean on. I warn such trade union leaders that they need only to go back, not far, and examine the tremendous work that their unions and their union leadership's conscious of the plight of workers and what they must do to rescue them from the thralldom of the ages. Go back on that, and you will stay so far away from the PNM that everybody will think that it is a plague. [*Desk thumping*]

I thought, Mr. Speaker, that I would just mention a couple of the things, the successes, very important ones that we have realized. There is a situation today that some people are asking me to intervene on and to follow such instructions as would have been done by an earlier administration. No. The parties depend on each other for a safe and productive work environment as the parties must depend on each other for the resolution of issues that exist between them. This Minister of Labour is not going to be jumping into everybody's fight prematurely.

If you did not have a registered majority union in the premises then there is nothing in the law that prevents you as manufacturer, as employer, as management—yes, from meeting with a representative or two from among the workers. Okay, you have a problem? All right, will three of you come and sit down and talk with us and let us see how we can get our arms around the problem. That is how I understand at least until we have a revision, a comprehensive revision of the industrial relations laws. Until we have such a revision people must learn to relate, one with the other.

We must establish the objective. The objective is to build the highway. The objective is to refine crude oil, so that motorists and pilots can drive and can fly, then we must concentrate on producing that, but of course, we have a responsibility to organize the conditions in which that will be done most productively. People must begin to take responsibility for their actions and for themselves and ensure that that responsibility points to the well-being of the whole—Trinidad and Tobago. That is the position. That is the position.

[HON. E. MC LEOD]

You do not agree today to take the job at certain conditions and tomorrow, “I ain’t wuking again.” Before you have sat down and decided—well, look I have seen some inconsistencies in this, that or other, and I would like to have it ameliorated. I am prepared as I know other people are prepared to give as much assistance in that regard as we are now organizing ourselves to do.

Mr. Speaker, the Government is also aware that people-centred development is the core of national development. Therefore, this Government has since its ascension to office sought to empower our citizens through—and I perhaps speak for other Ministers now—greater expansion of the GATE programme for tertiary studies, the opening of new Early Childhood Care and Education facilities, refining the On-the-Job Training Programme; expanding the number of scholarships available to qualifying nationals to pursue their tertiary education overseas; creating a memorial fund for fallen officers of the protective services.

1.10 p.m.

It is not that we have not been working, but the bad vibes coming from elsewhere and encouraged by persons who ought to be more responsible than that, that is what is the talking point; that is what is getting headlines.

Providing the option of land acquisition for persons who desire that option—was it yesterday morning?—there was this important programme in San Fernando. Five hundred persons got lots—Land for the Landless. Establishing mobile libraries in previously neglected communities; the opening of the Scarborough Hospital in Tobago; repair of the runway and lights and the 24/7 operation of the ANR Robinson Airport; the upgrade of THA administrators to the status of Deputy Permanent Secretaries. We did that, Mr. Speaker! [*Desk thumping*] The confirmation of public servants in various posts after 20 years; the commissioning of a gas station in Roxborough; the receipt of land titles by nine Tobagonians. This might appear symbolic, but it is an important symbolic move—nine Tobagonians—and this happened January 14, 2013 and the list goes on.

Let me just mention a couple of things done under the portfolio of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development.

Mr. Speaker: You have four more minutes, hon. Minister.

Hon. E. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I will get right into it. I want to speak just about, then, the IBIS programme. IBIS is going to come to Diego Martin. IBIS is going to Carenage. IBIS is going to Point Fortin.

Mr. Speaker, we have realized 25 new businesses coming into being since this partnership Government has come to office and we are contributing in a most

tangible way. We have the IBIS programme that comprises two components: the pre-incubation training that lasts approximately six months and provides candidates of varying educational backgrounds with the necessary business and entrepreneurial training to assist in the operation of their businesses. You have the incubation in which clients are provided with seed capital, some of their equipment financing needs, space for their businesses, as well as mentoring operational and professional support.

As of May 2013, 25 new businesses have been established under the IBIS programme in numerous areas. For example, waste management, information technology, events management, fashion and beauty, fisheries, health and fitness, et cetera. NEDCO has been engaging local stakeholders to provide the technical expertise toward the establishment of commercial business incubators with the ultimate intention of drawing high-value small businesses, and noted among these are: the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI); the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business, the University of the West Indies (UWI); the University of Trinidad and Tobago. We have been doing tremendous work and we are ensuring that nobody is left behind.

NEDCO had over 6,000 delinquent accounts, Mr. Speaker, when we came to office—NEDCO, which is the National Entrepreneurial Development Company Limited. People—before we came in—were sent to NEDCO and sometimes with a note from particular Ministers for them to get what? It turned out to be grants. They did not have a business plan, they had no identified business and about \$2 million in about seven months was disbursed. “Yuh want some money, go to NEDCO.”

Dr. Gopeesingh: A slush fund.

Hon. E. Mc Leod: Yeah. And those who got loans had become delinquents—some 6,000 of them—so we met a delinquency portfolio of 77 per cent. Mr. Speaker, today, the delinquency portfolio has been drastically reduced to less than 10 per cent. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I cannot deal with the other points in 30 seconds. I want to thank you very much for the opportunity that has been granted to me to make this contribution. I hope that it has helped the situation affecting us all in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: I think it is a good time for us to have lunch. This sitting is now suspended until 2.16 p.m. Sixteen minutes past two, we shall resume.

1.16 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

2.16 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Toco/Sangre Grande, Minister of Science and Technology. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Science and Technology (Hon. Dr. Rupert Griffith): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure joining this debate. We have been here for the last two and a half days, going on three days, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, when you look at the time that is spent here in this Chamber, debating what I call a non-Motion, trivial. I do not know what other adjectives I could use to describe it that my colleagues on this side have not yet used. But what I want to say is that all of it, they are very appropriate, very apt adjectives in terms of the frivolity of this Motion. It really boggles the mind that someone who claims to, or whose desire it is to be the Prime Minister of this country, could bring such a Motion. It really boggles the mind.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to spend a lot of time talking about many things that have been already addressed by my colleagues on this side, and I agree with all of them. You could talk about the technicality of the emails. You could talk about the fact that it is clearly a work of mischief with clear objectives to destabilize and discredit the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. And, Mr. Speaker, it is done without the concern that, what it would do to the image and the credibility of a country such as Trinidad and Tobago. My Ministry is Science and Technology, and I am in touch with countries all around the world almost on a daily basis on initiatives on science and technology, and for the last couple of days, most of the conversations had to do with this frivolous and vexatious Motion brought here in this House.

Mr. Speaker, you know this is—I have been in Parliament for quite some time now, and this is my third term. I served at all levels of this House, from where you are, Speaker, for a short while. I served on this side and the other side, and at one time I even sat in the gallery, so I covered all four sides of the Parliament. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you—[*Interruption*—well, maybe. I want to tell you, I have never seen such a disgraceful Motion coming before this House, Mr. Speaker. It is damaging, it is nefarious, it is wicked. And I tell you, I am saddened to see that this day has come to the Parliament, this honourable House, of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, this Opposition over the last three years in this Parliament have not come to the Parliament with any significant or any strong contribution to deal with policies, or to deal with any Motion or any Bill coming to the Parliament. Their modus operandi is to oppose and oppose and oppose. It seems to me that their belief is that Opposition is just to oppose.

But, Mr. Speaker, this Motion on Monday, it paints a picture of our current Opposition as a very disarrayed, ragtag bunch of pseudo-politicians with an obsession to return to power by any means possible. That is what it portrayed on Monday. This current PNM Opposition is bankrupt of ideas, Mr. Speaker, whose intention is to just oppose and, as I said—everything they come here is to oppose.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the television programmes that I enjoy watching with my young daughter is one they call WWE Raw on wrestling. And there is one wrestler, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you look at that programme, but I certainly recommend it because it adds well to good relaxation. There is one wrestler called Gordon Bryant. Anybody knows Gordon Bryant? In the wrestling world they refer to him as “Goat Face”. Short fella, but he is a great wrestler. And his tag, like all of the wrestlers they have tags, it could be John Cena or some other name, but his is, “no, no, no.” And it is so bad now, the rest of the audience would be shouting, “yes, yes, yes,” and he is saying, “no” and it became a habit. He does not know why he is saying no, and I think that appropriates the Opposition of Trinidad and Tobago very well.

Much has been said about the frivolous Motion. The Motion is baseless, it lacks substance and this Motion, Mr. Speaker, is a complete waste of parliamentary time. You know, I was thinking, listening, this is the third day of all the contribution from both sides, and when you really analyze the Motion, Mr. Speaker, you realize that—and maybe it would be a good exercise for the parliamentary staff to do—that if you were to add up the number of man hours, let me say, “man and woman hours,” because I know the ladies on the other side and on this side may not be happy with that term. But if you listen to the—if you add up the number of hours spent here at this frivolous debate, and you add the costs for the staff of the Parliament, the staff [*sic*] of your time, Mr. Speaker, the price of the food each person eats here, the utilities and everything else, if you put a dollar figure to that, you would see what that frivolous Motion cost the people of Trinidad and Tobago in taxes. A Motion that leads to what?

If I were the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, I would have been a very, very worried man at this time, because if you listened to all of the radio stations, the talk shows, and you look at the TV programmes, you can see that they are heaping scorn on this parliamentary Opposition because of this frivolous Motion.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to spend too much time on the technicality of the email, I think that has already—the emails—I think that has already been established. But I took the time during the break to talk to some of my IT

specialists. As you know, Mr. Speaker, my new Ministry is Science and Technology. And we discussed a number of the technicalities, and I want to tell you, out of the 32 emails, 28 of them are fictitious and 28 of them cannot stand. And without getting into too many details, when those emails show that two of them were sent at the same time, that is impossible. For you to send two emails at the same time, you have to use two computers, and even if you use two computers, they would not be at the same timing. It will show up on your address as two separate emails. Well, I do not know how in the world the Leader of the Opposition and the Members on that side were able to do that. Maybe in his winding-up he will tell us.

The whole issue of the number of characters, Mr. Speaker, everybody knows, Google or whoever, you have to have—and this was established here already—at least six characters to 31, or to 30 in some cases, and most of the 28 were four characters. How in the world that was sent and went and did not come back? I think the Leader of the Opposition will tell us.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are so many things wrong that this thing is just not possible. I would not take time, I think the AG and some of the other speakers on this side already established that those emails were fictitious, they were somebody's "fickle of imagination", trying to juxtapose information to come to discredit this Government.

But you, see, Mr. Speaker, this issue is beyond just letting ICT people look at it. I think it is more than that. I think and I believe what has happened is nothing but cybercrime, and my colleague from Tunapuna, the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, he touched on it, he touched on cybercrime as a serious issue. And I want to tell you my Ministry is currently looking at the legislation along with the Ministry of National Security to bring appropriate legislation for Trinidad and Tobago. The only regret I have about all of this is that we have not completed that exercise yet, and we had the legislation in place, because this would have been a classic case that would have ended before the courts, and it may very well end before the courts.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you, you have read the emails, and one of the things that my Ministry is doing in putting this legislation together is looking at best practices around the world as far as cybercrime is concerned. As Chairman of Commonwealth Connects, one of the issues that we are addressing at the level of the Commonwealth, Commonwealth ICT, is the issue of cybercrime. And my hon. colleague from Tunapuna was right, cybercrime is a big issue not only for

Trinidad and Tobago, but definitely the rest of the world. Even in Dubai, the last ICT Conference, the WCIT Conference, the issue of cybercrime was addressed, and most of the world adopted a framework for cybercrime, and in some cases such as India, adopted laws for cybercrime.

But one of the things that is crippling us, emails and cybercrimes usually originate across borders, and legislation to deal with issues across borders is something that the international agencies are working on. My colleague from Tunapuna could tell you about that, and we are now collaborating—"we" meaning international ICT Ministers and legal advisors—are now collaborating to see how we could enact legislation that will lead to cross-border cybercrimes, Mr. Speaker. And when that is done, it does not matter where the crime originates, you would be able to prosecute that person who does the crime.

But I want to tell you one of the practices in cybercrime that we are looking at closely here for Trinidad and Tobago, and with your leave, Mr. Speaker, I want to read into the record some of the initiatives we are looking at? If I have your leave, I will proceed. Thank you. And I want to look at—we are looking at India as one of the best practices' countries, and India is one of the progressive countries in cybercrime that has already gone and enacted legislation, and our legislation will pattern closely India's legislation. And they have written the Government of India, the Department of Electronic and Information Technology which is similar to our Ministry of Science and Technology—that developed, they have written up a number of initiatives to address cybercrimes.

Let me just read a few things into the record, Mr. Speaker, in terms of what India has done, and more than likely what Trinidad and Tobago will use as best practices, among other countries in the world. The Indian scenario says: presently around 141 million users are using Internet; 141 million. Around 941 million mobile phones are being used in India and teledensity is around 68 per cent. Our mobile density in Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker, as you know, is 138 per cent. So we are the number-one country in the world for mobile telephone communication. That means every individual has approximately two phones in Trinidad and Tobago. We are number one, India has 68 per cent.

There are 134 major Internet service providers and around 20 million high-speed Internet connections, broadband, Internet service providers, and around—all of these are operational in the country with 24 million Indian websites; 24 million Indian websites. So you will well understand the need for cybercrime in a country like India and many other progressive and developing countries, Mr. Speaker.

2.30 p.m.

The pervasive nature of the Internet advancement in communication and information technology, low cost of the computing and mobile devices with high-end features all contribute to increase in cybercrimes worldwide as well as in India. So you see the mass volume of Internet services.

Amongst the various cybercrimes, the following have been observed in the country, the nature of incidents observed largely in the country, and I want to read out some of the ones. And, Mr. Speaker, as I read these out, I would like you to look at the list of emails coming from the Opposition and what they refer to. Out of the 32 emails, you will see how many of them will fall in these categories of cybercrimes.

The first one is spam, and we will talk a little bit more about what spam is later; cybercrime stalking; hacking; identity theft; computer espionage; computer sabotage; intellectual property crimes; infringement of privacy; piracy; pornography and/or obscenity; denial of service; computer literate forgery; virus or malicious code; IP spoofing; system misuse; harassment via emails; defamation; and email spoofing. We will talk a little bit more about that. One thousand, seven hundred and ninety one cybercrime cases were registered under this IT Act, Mr. Speaker, in the year 2011, and compared to 966 cases during the previous year in 2010. So you saw the massive growth of cybercrime in one—in over a span of one year.

Crime—head-wise and age-group-wise—profile of the offenders arrested under the IT Act, 2000 reveals that, and this is very interesting, 41.1 per cent, or 487 out of 1,184, of the offenders arrested were under loss or damage to computer resource utility; under hacking with computer systems, of which 53.3 per cent, or 260 out of 487, were in the age group of 18 to 30 years, Mr. Speaker; 63.8 per cent, or 283 out of 434 persons, of the total persons arrested in obscene publication, transmission in electronic forms were in the age group of 18 to 30 years.

I wonder, given the incompetence of these emails because it is established that they used the wrong dates; they used four characters instead of the appropriate number of characters—between six and 31—to send emails, and all of that; it has to be a very young, unintelligent person that put that debacle, as I call it, together and forwarded to the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Member: Why young?

Hon. R. Griffith: It has to be. Well, like my colleague said, it could be a foolish senior person, but I think life's natural experience will give the senior person more intelligence to do something so stupid.

Mr. Speaker, cybercrime is a—they are serious charges. In India, I want to tell you, and there is a whole listing, they have a list of the crimes that are associated with cybercrimes, but I just want to read into the record just a few and you will see relevance to, Mr. Speaker, the emails sent here in this House, laid on the table in this House. And among the list here, the first one I want to talk about is email bombing, that is, flooding an email box with an innumerable number of emails to disable and to notice important messages at times. That is email bombing.

Then you have another one here, personal data theft. That is stealing personal data. The penalty for both of these crimes in India, Mr. Speaker, is three years. So the person who did this crime in Trinidad and Tobago—I would like to call it that even though we do not have the laws yet—they are looking at a minimum of three years for a similar type of crime.

You have data theft, which is stealing data. Provisions under the Act, that is also a three-year fine. They have worms, Trojan horses and viruses; those are different viruses that persons can send into your own operating systems, and that is another crime that will bring three years' penalty if found guilty; sabotage of computer, taking control of computers with the help of malware. The other is Web pages defacing. Did they deface the email, Mr. Speaker? I mean, my colleagues talk about cut and pasting; that is a very, very serious crime in India, defacing information and defacing websites; logic bomb attack triggers on an event. You trigger events for a specific purpose for unlawful purposes.

Mr. Speaker, let me read a couple more into the record. Data diddling, that is modifying data for the process of and restraining data integrity for unlawful purposes. And, of course, everybody knows about spam and spoofing, which is unsolicited emails, and the penalty for all of those in India is three years.

So, Mr. Speaker, we need to very quickly enact cybercrime legislation in Trinidad and Tobago. And, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Member for Tunapuna said earlier, the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Science and Technology are well on the way in bringing forward cybercrime legislation for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recommend in addition to the fact that the Prime Minister made a very, very serious and important decision to refer this matter, a very wise decision to refer this matter to the Acting Commissioner of Police, I

want to recommend that this matter be referred, not to an ICT specialist, but a cybercrime specialist, because I believe that the Opposition of Trinidad and Tobago committed a serious cybercrime perpetrated on this Parliament, Mr. Speaker, and I want to recommend that those emails be sent to a cybercrime specialist.

Why a cybercrime specialist? While the ICT Specialist can trace the source of an email or it could look at the structure of the email and tell you whether this email is properly constructed; it could trace the domain; it could trace the email address and a whole host of things we can do right now with the technology available. You need to look into the criminal aspects of this action, Mr. Speaker, and a cybercrime specialist can do that for us. And I am hoping that the Commissioner of Police, we do not tell them how to do their work, they are independent, but I am putting this out for consideration, that when this matter is fully investigated, it is investigated by a cybercrime specialist.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am not going to spend a lot of time on the email debacle, on that what I call frivolous action taken by the Opposition, but I want to spend a little time talking about my Ministry. The Ministry of Science and Technology, as you are aware, just came into being in July last year and, since we came into being, our mission is to bridge the digital divide of Trinidad and Tobago. We want to make this nation an ICT-savvy nation. We want to be able to set the ICT communication for Trinidad and Tobago so that we are not left behind the rest of the world.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about what we are doing, and I am honoured to have been assigned the portfolio of science and technology. While my task is not an easy one, it is extremely rewarding. The creation of the Ministry of Science and Technology on June 25, 2012 was a well-thought-out and powerful act by the hon. Prime Minister and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. It was meant to embrace the significant changes which we are facing in the world today, and equip our people with significant changes and tools and skills and understanding that they need to function effectively in a modern-day society, Mr. Speaker. We either harness the potential of science and technology to our advantage or to run the risk of continuously playing "ketch up" with the rest of the world.

So, Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago cannot be left behind and, I dare say, will not be left behind. This is an opportune time to point out that the foundation for all of my Ministry's activities is pillar one of this Government's Medium-Term Policy Framework, 2011—2013, which is people-centred development,

which is at the heart of the Government's development strategy. It focuses on the people of Trinidad and Tobago and their development aspirations as well as the strategies that allow each and every individual the opportunity for development—whether it is economic development, social development or overall national development.

This Government recognizes that advances in science knowledge have led to great benefits to humankind. Life expectancy has increased significantly, cures have been discovered for many diseases, antibiotics alone have saved more human lives than we killed in all of the countries' wars around the world combined. Agricultural output has increased significantly and helped fight hunger, as well as an innumerable amount of products, services and processes that have made this life infinitely more comfortable for successive generations, Mr. Speaker.

Due to progress in transportation and communication, millions of human beings cross national borders every day, and hundreds of millions of written, visual and sound messages are exchanged instantaneously. All around the world there are billions of pages of information on the World Wide Web, and with a click of a mouse, Mr. Speaker, individuals around the world can access them.

Mr. Speaker, my Ministry is a relatively new one, as I have said, but the work we have done since June 2012 touches the core of human development in Trinidad and Tobago. The Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, has said, and I quote:

“One of the most effective channels for eradicating poverty, creating wealth and enhancing competitiveness is through the acquisition, adaptation and application of relevant technologies.”

This concept forms the basis of my Ministry's core values. We intend to ensure that technology is available to everyone, Mr. Speaker.

It is important as I speak of science and technology to zero in, on ICT, the buzz phrase that is no stranger to any of us. ICT is a key component of the overarching science and technology portfolio. Pillar four refers to the use of ICT as the essential element of the infrastructure underpinning the creation of a modern competitive economy in an information-rich, knowledge and technology-driven world, Mr. Speaker.

2.45 p.m.

By extension also, science and technology is intrinsically linked to pillar five: creating a more diversified knowledge-intensive economy for Trinidad and

Tobago. The diversification process requires nurturing the creative and innovative capacity of our citizens.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, 36(1) please. Relate it to the Motion.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister and Member for Toco/Sangre Grande, if you can link that to either strengthening or undermining of institutions. I think, connect your contribution for the House to the Motion before us and not to leave it open. This is not about a debate dealing with what a Ministry has done, but if you could connect what the Ministry has done to the Motion, I would appreciate it and I am sure the House would appreciate it. So, could you connect? Thank you.

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: I am guided, Mr. Speaker, but I would think that email is part of ICT.

Dr. Moonilal: Oh yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: It is part of the technology. It is the largest mode of communication in the world today. It is high speed. As this ministry seeks to do the broadband development to create greater access and greater universal service for telecommunication, email has a very important part and I was hoping that, by giving the foundation of the Ministry of Science and Technology, in terms of how it is being rolled out, in terms of the various systems and strategies being placed, will facilitate the whole business of communication of which emailing and high-speed data is part of the overall process.

Mr. Cadiz: They would not want that.

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: So I hope that link is linked to it. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I would continue to say some of the things that my Ministry are doing—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: Are?

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith:—to enable communication for Trinidad and Tobago.

Miss Mc Donald: Ministry is.

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith:—ministry is doing for—thank you very much, okay.

Mr. Speaker, you would now appreciate the huge responsibility that rests with my Ministry. Let me just say that the Ministry of Science and Technology has three major agencies. [*Interruption and crosstalk*] I understand how you all feel.

Mr. Speaker: Please, Member for Port of Spain South, I do not know if you want to take my place but you cannot be directing another Member when there is also a Chair here. I am the one that will direct. So do not direct the Member what to do and what not to do. Only the Speaker has the authority to do so. Continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: Thank you Mr. Speaker. They talk about the respect for institutions but they want to usurp your role as you have said.

Mr. Speaker: Do not worry with that. Just focus on your contribution.

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: It is a certain amount of disrespect for organizations. It is that same organization that fired a Speaker sitting in your very Chair because of disrespect for the Speaker and disrespect for the institution. [*Desk thumping*] And it is the same group—it is the genealogy of the PNM, it is the DNA of the PNM, where they have absolutely no respect for authority and no respect for institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. That is why they behave the way they behave. They are not interested in anything that is serious and uplifting.

Miss Cox: The Motion, the Motion!

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: They are interested in “lacuray”. That is what “all yuh interested in”.

Hon. Member: “Kuchur”.

Mrs. Khan: “They worse than kuchur”.

Mr. Sharma: This is like a manufacturers’ meeting. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: So I understand how they feel. Mr. Speaker, my Ministry has three major agencies that provide the vehicle for science and technology in Trinidad and among these three agencies are Niherst—that is the National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology; iGovTT—the National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited; and the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to tell you that, as far as governance of science and technology is concerned, this Government has put in place a ministerial steering committee which advises the Government on ICT development for Trinidad and Tobago. In addition to that, Trinidad and Tobago is now the chair of the Commonwealth Connects and I am proud to sit in that chair, as far as ICT is concerned—[*Desk thumping*—and our contribution to the world is to let them know how we have been able to build out our mobile technology that puts us at number one in the world. I want to tell you, in a matter of weeks, we will be putting out requests for proposals for additional mobile providers for Trinidad and Tobago. What this will do is it will provide greater access to communication, so, perhaps, they may now be able to access greater voice and use more handsets, smartsets for communication in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the TATT is responsible for the ICT regulation of Trinidad and Tobago, and iGovTT is responsible for all of the ICT build-outs, all of the ICT arrangements, for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, as we go along, we want to be able—we, the Ministry of Science and Technology—to proclaim the Data Protection Act as part of our legislative agenda. Even more so, now that we have this frivolous abuse of what happened here on Monday, we see the need for certain legislation, a legislative backbone for ICT for Trinidad and Tobago. The development of a robust ICT legislative background or legislative framework is intended to act as the catalyst to force the national ICT strategy, smartTT plan, and further enable the transformation of the country into an ICT knowledge-based society.

Let me give some examples of some of the laws we propose to enact to provide that backbone for ICT for Trinidad and Tobago, and maybe it would protect the country against some of these frivolous activities such as those brought here on Monday. It will ensure citizens' trust for data protection and personal privacy; that is one piece of legislation; facilitating the electronic communication with less hacking opportunities; competition and competitive regulatory environment; ensuring citizens' trust through consumer protection; ensuring citizens' safety and security for cybercrime; e-commerce by the reduction in transaction quotes for business, consumers and government, whilst increasing transactions improving credibility for investors; standards and interoperability frameworks across ICT and technology landscapes; and development of a transformational government, as among others.

Mr. Speaker, one of the flagship projects to enable bridging that digital divide and greater access to communication—in particular government services—is one that I am very much proud of and very much involved in, and that is the development of ICT access centres for Trinidad and Tobago with emphasis on community-based, especially in the rural communities.

2.55 p.m.

At this time my intention is to enable, as part one of this development process, to access six ICT community-based centres in areas such as Penal, Siparia, Debe, Toco, Cumana, Mayaro, Tabaquite, Talparo, Point Fortin—and Member for Point Fortin, you will be happy to hear that. Where is the Member for Point Fortin, she is not here?—Cedros and Tobago. The first six would be rolled out by the end of September.

Miss Mc Donald: What about Port of Spain, Diego Martin?

Mr. De Coteau: None in Moruga?

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: Sorry?

Miss Mc Donald: What about in Port of Spain South, Diego Martin?

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: Well—

Mr. Speaker: Member, please ignore.

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: Yeah, I will ignore her, but I would like to let her know, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Ignore Port of Spain South, Members.

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: Yeah, but for Port of Spain South's benefit and you are entitled to ask the question, but do it right next time, stand on your feet and ask to give way, but I will tell you anyway.

Mr. Sharma: “And dat is ah heavy roll out anyway.” [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: I will tell you anyway. In the next year, we will be rolling out 24 such centres and your area will eventually receive one of those ICT community-based centres. So there is much more. TATT is responsible for the regulatory arrangements for Trinidad and Tobago, and we will ensure that quality-level telecommunications, proper pricing, availability and access modes will be made available to Trinidad and Tobago.

TATT will be rolling out a number of new initiatives, the implementation of an IXP exchange centre for Trinidad and Tobago. What that will do?—you know, we are talking about emails, every time—and this is what I was telling you earlier, that it is easy to track an email, because the way the system works now is through an ISP, and when you email something, it goes through that ISP. It goes up and in this case, our case predominantly so, the United States, then it comes back down and then you receive it in your system. What we are doing in Trinidad and Tobago is to eliminate that external route, put our own IXP in. By October this year it will be rolled out, so that when you email, it stays in Trinidad.

Hon. Member: “Dey hah to bring back ah motion in October.”

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: Yes. So what that will do, Mr. Speaker, it will reduce cost, it will give you higher speeds, and it will give the ISP, the international provider greater control, so that when frivolous emails, such as those, are going

through the process, it will be able to censor it and kick it out. So that is one of the developments of TATT.

Another development is the number portability, Mr. Speaker. Again, another control whereby, as we increase the number of mobile channels, you do not necessarily need to have two or three cell phones as we have now, but you could retain your number. So even if you change the telephone company, or you relocate to another part of the country, you can retain your phone number and TATT is working on that number portability.

Mr. Sharma: So it could feature car numbers.

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: Right, something like that. Well, you know about that in transportation. So, Mr. Speaker, the broadband access for Trinidad and Tobago, we would be going to Cabinet within the next two weeks to present a proposal which would incorporate the ICT policy for Trinidad and Tobago and we will aligning it with the broadband build-out for Trinidad and Tobago to provide greater access and universal service for ICT in Trinidad and Tobago.

So, Mr. Speaker, iGovTT continues to provide ICT service for all of the Ministries. We have just launched the ttconnect and through the ttconnect at any point of presence, and with the proper access codes, one could access any government information on database at high-speed levels and, therefore, that is another significant development.

Just two weeks ago in Tobago, we launched one of the ttconnect buses and we have seen how important it is. My colleagues from Tobago were very happy to receive that service, so they could stay right there at their point of presence and access any information, including the Parliament website, at high speed. This development would be done throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I do not want to utilize my full time here today. I think much has been said about this debate. It is unfortunate that we have to stand here in 2013, and to see that the Parliament is reduced to the level it came to on Monday, and this must not happen in the future. I thought that in 1986 the PNM as a political party, the generational curse to this nation was broken, but apparently it was not. In 2010, we had another opportunity to break that generational curse that the PNM is to this country. It did not happen.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, I rise on 36(5). PNM is certainly not a generational curse. Oh, no, cannot describe us like that. Cannot!

Hon. Member: That is right.

Mr. Sharma: Five generations, not one.

Mr. Roberts: Not one generation alone.

Hon. Member: A genome curse. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: A genome curse. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Okay. I think it is an umbrella statement he is making and he is not pointing out to any particular Member or individual. So, I will say in the context of the debate and so on, it is permissible. Continue. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been a generational curse. When you listen to the debate coming out from this side, every Member on this side could talk about the follies of the PNM; they could talk about the corruption. They resurrected some names here that I had forgotten.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for Toco/Sangre Grande and the Minister of Science and Technology has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. A. Roberts*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Minister, may I also advise, when a Member objects to language being used, I would really ask Members to be a little more elegant in their use of language, lest Members see language in the context of how it is being used that could possibly generate some disorder in the House. So when a Member objects, I would ask Members if they can be a little more elegant in their language, when they are describing Members or their organizations. Continue, hon. Member. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I am guided, but the fact is when you look at the debate and the information generated particularly of the Members on this side, and about the various DNA of the PNM, you could tell it has been nothing but a great impediment, a generational curse to this country, and it is on that basis I am making the point.

Well, you see in May 2010, I thought that generational trend was broken, but what emerged is a very weak and bankrupt Opposition that seemed to have lost its way from May 24, 2010. Not the fact that they perceive themselves as being opposed, but the Opposition has become a perennial impediment to the development of proper governance and the legislative procedure for Trinidad and Tobago. So they not only moved out from that generational situation that I explained earlier, Mr. Speaker, but they have now become a perennial impediment to good governance to Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Well said.

3.05 p.m.

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: And I want to tell you and I want to tell them, Mr. Speaker, that the people of this country are not foolish. I want to tell them take some time out and listen to some of the opinions being brought on the radio stations and on—

Mr. Roberts: Even on 95.5.

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: Yes, even on 95.5, their station, and on television, and listen to what the population is saying about your performance as an Opposition. It is pathetic, Mr. Speaker, to hear the commentary about that Opposition.

We recognize, in any democracy, effective opposition is important to good governance. We are still looking for effective opposition in Trinidad and Tobago. What we are seeing is an Opposition that its main motive is to get back into governance and doing so by any means possible.

Mr. Speaker, you talk about language, but I want to tell you there is a saying that a green and purple donkey, just like the Opposition coming back into government, is something they would not see; not in the next two terms. I could tell you that, Mr. Speaker.

So, we need to maintain the high level of standards that we have experienced in this Parliament—at least when I sat in that Chair, Mr. Speaker—and I have to say that we were able to maintain a certain level of decorum and, Mr. Speaker, I know it is not well to talk about the Speaker's performance, but I want to say, from where I sit, one of the best control of this House—the fairness, the impartiality—is one of the best I have seen in a long time, Mr. Speaker, and I give you compliment for that. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, this Motion has hurt this country. We are struggling to, at this time, encourage international investments, financial investments. People are looking at us. The fact that in the same week, within a seven-day span, Mr. Speaker, two of the world's top leaders will be in our borders, the fact that they will be here in Trinidad and Tobago, and I listened to one of the consuls on television from the People's Republic of China explaining why they are here and, Mr. Speaker, I felt proud about what I heard on, I think, CNC3, one of the TV stations, earlier this week, when the People's Republic of China's consuls said that Trinidad and Tobago is one of the most progressive countries in this region and that Trinidad and Tobago is a great centre for investment, I felt good about that, Mr. Speaker.

But then when you come to a Parliament on a Monday and you listen to that frivolous and vexatious Motion that goes viral—we are all living in a global

village right now; anything that is said and done, within seconds it is all over world—within seconds—and we have to be very careful of the messages we are sending internationally to the rest of the world. Do we love our country or do we hate it? Because we are not in governance, do we want to mash it up and hope that if we get in there, we will fix it and everything will be “cool breeze”, as my good colleague next to me here says?

No, Mr. Speaker, we have to love our country. We have to put our best foot forward. We have to promote this country. My colleague, the Minister of Tourism, travels all over this world, branding Trinidad and Tobago as a place to invest, a place to visit, a place where people are friendly and warm, a beautiful country that you could come to and feel good and when you arrive here, all of the headlines on the papers talking about emails and—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member:—fabrication.

Hon. Dr. R. Griffith: Fabrication is a good word, but talking about emails, which could only lead to the destruction of the perception and the image of Trinidad and Tobago. Is that what we want as a people? Is that the best we could offer? Or do they feel that is a vehicle to get back into governance?

And I want to tell them that the people are looking at you and they are judging you and the people want a responsible Government. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell my colleagues on the other side it is time that they shape up; it is time that they step up, or, I will tell you, they will remain over there for a long time and we will be over here for a very, very long time.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for this short time that I—this short input that I made; for this short moment you have given me, Mr. Speaker, to say just a few words. I endorse all that my colleagues have said on this side, Mr. Speaker. I want to condemn the Motion. It is frivolous and vexatious. Mr. Speaker, I want to reject the Motion and let them know that this is one of the best Governments under one of the most powerful and insightful and caring leaders Trinidad and Tobago has ever had. [*Desk thumping*]

She manages the Cabinet with objectivity; she manages the Cabinet. We use consensus for decision making and I could tell you that is not the way it was in others, because one of the opportunities I had in my political life was to serve under three other Prime Ministers: two in the other group—that is why I can talk so much about them—and one under this group. Mr. Speaker, I say today in this Parliament, without fear or favour, there is none other like the current Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Kamla Persad-Bissessar. [*Desk thumping*]

She has this country at heart. She is leading a team of coalition partners well and, Mr. Speaker, we hold the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago and we will strive together collectively, one objective, one people, one country, one love. Trinidad and Tobago will prevail. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Arima, Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Sharma: Let us hear the word.

The Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Rodger Samuel): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a privilege for me to participate in this debate and to share some of my observations as I listened intently over the last two days and even to this morning as to deliberations and the contributions of colleagues in the House.

One of the things that came to my mind, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that at every sitting of the House, before we deliberate on anything, your honoured self and the Speakers of the past have had the privilege of sharing with us or praying with us even before we start.

I am not too sure, Mr. Speaker, how many of us take heed to the prayer that is uttered even when we begin, where the plea is to our Almighty God, the creator of the universe, and we are asking and we are beseeching him to direct and prosper the deliberations of the Members of the House here assembled for the advancement of His glory and the trust and welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I oftentimes sit here and, quietly, from time to time I would listen and observe, Mr. Speaker, as to the proceedings and how we conduct ourselves on the business of the House. On many occasions, I would draw my own conclusions, but yet, not to be biased on anything, I would at times, when I return home, view the replaying of the day's sitting to see how we looked; and in many instances it is embarrassing as to how we look, from the standpoint of the national public, as they view us on this tube—[*Interruption*]

Mr. De Coteau: How we behave.

Hon. R. Samuel:—and how we behave and what we say.

3.15 p.m.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, in many instances, it is unpleasant to the eyes and ears. The Parliament was so designed, and you have in so many instances emphasized the fact that it is supposed to be a place—and it is the legislative arm and branch of Government. But in the midst of your corrections, you would

always define the fact that it is a place where the nation expects a great deal—a great deal from the standpoint of high standards, high morals, ethics and respect to the highest; a place that is supposed to be so well presented that even children, schoolchildren, teenagers can have and find no difficulty in coming and sitting in the House and observe, and not having to be offended and affected by our actions.

I am also aware, Mr. Speaker, of the effort by both yourself and the President of the Senate to sort of enlighten our schools and our children and familiarize them with the happenings and the procedures of the Parliament, and encourage them to come from time to time to observe the sitting, and on Monday I was pleased to see an entire classroom sitting in the House. But while that happened, Mr. Speaker, I recognized that at a certain point—

Mr. Indarsingh: They became uncomfortable.

Hon. R. Samuel:—the teacher had to hustle the children out of the Chamber, and I took note of that because I was quite concerned and, in doing so, I recognized at what point in time they had to leave—when there was a certain type of language being expressed in this honourable House, which I was quite concerned about.

And not to judge, unfortunately, it is difficult for me to repeat it—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: But it is in the *Hansard*.

Hon. R. Samuel:—but I was able to grab a copy of the *Hansard* and I was quite concerned. I looked at the *Hansard* and then I got a copy of the printed emails situation, and I recognized that even the press, when they printed a lot of stuff, chose not to print some of the expletives that came from the emails. But, even in this House, I was quite concerned with certain words that were used in the House, and I had to then go to the iPad that the House has so afforded us, and typed in a particular word—

Mr. Indarsingh: Do not repeat it.

Hon. R. Samuel:—that I was not familiar with.

Mr. Indarsingh: You are a man of the cloth.

Hon. R. Samuel: So I typed in the word and was shocked because I was like, Do not tell “meh” that this—this is the *Hansard*. It is spelt “e-f-f-i-n”.

Mr. De Coteau: “Don’t spell it; don’t spell it!” Please.

Hon. R. Samuel: And I looked for the word because just like how the Member for St. Augustine had questioned the word “whilst” and the gentleman could not understand the usage of the word “whilst”, I wanted to be clear that I understood this particular word.

Mr. Indarsingh: You wanted clarity.

Hon. R. Samuel: And what I saw as to the meaning of the word, I was quite shocked, and I would not use it in the House, Mr. Speaker, but I am just encouraging Members of the House to be very careful, because all of Trinidad and Tobago looks on, and young people—only when I looked at the meaning of the word on the Net, I was quite concerned.

Mr. Indarsingh: When he showed me, I nearly collapsed!

Hon. R. Samuel: I was quite concerned. I did not know.

Mr. De Coteau: I was flabbergasted.

Hon. R. Samuel: And, Mr. Speaker, just to encourage that we be careful because our children are looking on at all of us in whatever we do here in this House.

Mr. Indarsingh: I nearly collapsed when he showed me.

Hon. R. Samuel: But, Mr. Speaker, when I listened carefully and I recognized that something was presented with regard to email addresses and stuff like that—and my purpose is not to deal with some of those things—I decided I will email a-n-a-n@gmail.com. I emailed it; I sent a message, and I received in return that “the email account that you tried to reach does not exist”.

Mr. Indarsingh: Read it into the record.

Hon. R. Samuel: I found it very strange—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Indarsingh: Read it into the record.

Hon. R. Samuel:—that it did not exist, an email account. I even tried it this morning again, 11.41—

Technical details of permanent failure. Google tried to deliver your mail, your message, but it was rejected by the server for the recipient domain gmail.com by gmail and the error that the other servers returned was 550-5.1.1. The email account that you tried to reach does not exist. Please try 55-5.1.1 double click the recipient’s email address for typos or 550-5— and it kept going on all the time.

And I found it strange that I had to be going on and on to figure out how could I get to this email address.

Dr. Browne: Try Digicel! *[Laughter]*

Mr. Roberts: “All yuh laughing! This ain’t funny.”

Hon. R. Samuel: So, Mr. Speaker, if something from the servers and from Google says, “it does not exist”, I am quite concerned as to the efficacy of what is presented. Not only that, but if something does not exist and an email address is one, according to the Internet, an email address as it says, identifies an email box to which email messages may be delivered, and if it does not exist, then it is not, according to this, an email address. Whatever else it is, I do not know.

But, Mr. Speaker, from time to time, we have had the privilege of hearing information come to this House with regard to somebody placing something in a mailbox; some information coming to someone. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I remember some time ago when there were deliberations in the House, there was also, according to the *Newsday* on January 28, 2012 and also I think the *Guardian* of that day, where in this House information came about some email—citing emails about the former Deputy Commissioner of Police, Jack Ewatski, concerning correspondence between him with some “flying” and some situation.

Oftentimes these things are left undone. People’s images and characters are brought into this House under the disguise of protection in Parliament and stuff like that and then—the cloak of parliamentary privileges—and it is left out there because the entire nation hears this.

In many instances, Mr. Speaker, the citizens of this nation have really little cause for redress, if any at all, in that your name could be brought up here, you can be accused or something could be said about you, and then all of a sudden, Mr. Speaker, you are left undone. People begin to look at you strangely and funny. They start to now discriminate and stigmatize you in a certain way, and the sitting is over, and then all of a sudden, Mr. Speaker, you go home to your own home and, that is it. This person has to deal with the stigma ascribed to them, and it is something I feel that we must look into.

3.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, if somebody breaks into my home, that is an invasion of my privacy, and if that person steals from me and then comes to this House and gives it away, whatever they stole from me, we say that that person is also part of the crime, he who receives the stolen items. What about if a person breaks into my email, steals my information, comes to the House and then gives it away? Are we to look at it the same way? Are we to determine that that is a crime and the people who are the recipients of the information are aiding and abetting and they are part of the crime also?

Are we to consider such, because they are left undone, left in the open and people’s lives become affected? I am quite concerned. I am quite concerned

because we hear it all the time. As a matter of fact, I have sat here quietly, and oftentimes when things are said in this House you would hear people say, “Why yuh doh say it outside?”. It means that there is a cloak that people capitalize on in the House to say things, and they say things knowing that they cannot repeat a lot of these things on the outside. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, if that is the example and the standard that this House exhibits for the nation’s children, I could now understand why so many of our young people want nothing to do with politics in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Indarsingh: That is why the teacher instructed them to move.

Hon. R. Samuel: So the teacher had to—and it was under advice I understand—to whisk the children out of here because of the language that was being used, and when I looked at the meaning, Mr. Speaker—wow!—it was not good.

Dr. Ramadharsingh: They had to take them to a safe area.

Hon. R. Samuel: In the House, in the Chamber, in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, under the idea of a Motion, or could it have been just an emotion, that we get all caught up in the situations and then find ourselves in the eyes of the public being demoted, because they see us and our standards less and less and less. I am quite concerned.

I am quite concerned, Mr. Speaker, with the many times you have had to stand and say, “People are looking at us”. I am very concerned about that. I am very concerned that we leave all of these things in the air—and you have had people having to write you from the outside, and sometimes, I mean I am not questioning your judgment, but many a time people feel that there is something unjust that has been said about them and they have no recourse.

If this is what we are saying to the nation that there is a standard for politicians and parliamentarians that is different, then the old saying that politics has a morality of its own seems to be true. We have got to be very careful as to how we approach things and how we see things. So Mr. Ewatski was left in the minds of people believing that he was on some “skul”, and it is not cleared up up to today. I am saying this and it meant that we cannot leave it open, but we have got to make sure that when we bring things up, that we bring a closure to it, and ensure the facts and the truth and that the person is not left undone and stigmatized by our nation.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time, but in so many instances, and I thought that I would have asked because I remember, and I said it before, when I heard the

Member for St. Augustine in his deliberation, and he shared with the young man who used the word “whilst” he was walking up the stairs and he asked him, “What is the meaning of ‘whilst’?” I thought it wise to ask, what is the meaning of “e-f-f-i-n”—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: I too.

Hon. R. Samuel:—because when I looked it up I probably had the wrong information. So I am asking us to be careful because our children are looking on and we are trying to get them to understand the procedures of Parliament, and the expletives need to be very—we need to be very careful. So the children had to leave, and I understand the children came from a school in Cumuto/Manzanilla, and I have asked Mr. Partap, the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla—[*Crosstalk*]—please look into it. I understand that is where they came from.

Hon. Member: Find out the state of the mind.

Mr. Seemungal: The Leader of Government Business—

Hon. R. Samuel: Mr. Speaker, I am not here to judge anybody or cast aspersions—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: They might have needed counselling the next day.

Hon. R. Samuel:—because the same measure wherewith you judge others, you shall be judged, so I am not here to judge anyone, but the wisdom in the midst of excitement, we need to be careful. We need to be wise, we must not just do what is right or wrong; our lives must not just be based upon what is right or wrong, but we must lift to the other level to see what is good and best. It is important for us to see that. What is best for the House? What is best for the nation? What is the best approach that I should have so that I can now generate the right thing so that when people view, they could see a certain standard?

Mr. Speaker, this idea that we can say it, we can expose it and then it is left undone, should be stopped. It should be stopped.

Hon. Member: Especially now we are on national television.

Hon. R. Samuel: Years ago nobody saw in any instances what took place in the House, well every day. As a matter of fact, I want to congratulate the parliamentary channel because it is one of the most popular things today. [*Desk thumping*] People sit and as a matter of fact, it is the best thing that has happened to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, people see us in our glory or in our worry. They see us and we have got to be concerned, and it is important for us to understand that if an email address does not exist, then I am blown with the fact

that I now have a printout of 28 or more that says, this exists. Very concerned about this, and I would love it to be cleared up.

Mr. Speaker, even when we look at things, we recognize that when we speak in this House—I was taught as a child growing up with my both parents, who are now deceased, that when mistakes happen in life, when there are blunders and you are corrected, it is necessary to, one, apologize, and, two, correct the blunder. I am told that, I grew up with that. Mr. Speaker, but in the House, the moment somebody acknowledges a wrong, it is a joke, and we are saying to our children that it is wrong to acknowledge a wrong, and that people laugh at you and they point fingers at you when you acknowledge a wrong. When we teach our children those morals that nothing is wrong with saying, “I am sorry”. Nothing is wrong with correcting your wrong, but in the House if any Member—as a matter of fact, sometimes you question, you know, the apologies, and how we say, based on your instruction, Mr. Speaker, I apologize for that or I take it back, it seems to be just ritual.

Hon. Member: Hollow.

Hon. R. Samuel: It is hollow because in many instances we only say it because you instructed that we take it back. And what are we saying to our nation’s children that we all have to realize that, is it wrong to apologize? Is it wrong to correct it? What is the message when we laugh at a person’s correction or when we have to jump up and say, “We ketch yuh”, and that kind of situation? What are we saying to our nation’s children, to hide things?

3.35 p.m.

Are we saying to them, “When you look at the Parliament Channel and you see all of us, just copy how we approach things and do this kind of stuff”? Are we saying that? But that is what we do, and it is something that we must learn and recognize, that we too are sending a strong message because we are supposed to be exemplars to the nation. And this is what is happening.

So somebody gets up and says, “You know something, it was wrong what you did,” and then all of a sudden you realize it was wrong and you said it was wrong, we are here to correct it, and correcting is another dilemma. It is another issue, as if we should not go that way. We must continue. So hear what happens, Mr. Speaker—and I am sticking to what is on the *Hansard*—we in this House are here to guide this nation. We in this House are here to deliberate, come up with conclusions and vote on things, and at the end of the day we need to stand by what we vote for. At the end of the day, the nation expects us to be mature enough so that when we make deliberations and we make decisions, we stand by it, and if

by chance after that we have to correct it, we will have to correct it, and nothing is wrong with correction.

But you know something, what we do in this House is no different to two young people going in a corner, getting themselves in a mess, and then when it comes to the forefront of their parents, one person “say”, “Is not me, is he make meh do it,” “Is not me, is she made me do it,” and “I could not trust you; I know something was wrong, but you made me do it.” We do not have the fortitude in this House to sit and say, “We did it and we were wrong, let us correct it and channel it in the right direction.” What message are we sending to the nation? It is important for us to see this. It is important for us to now regroup and now start to send a clear message to people that are looking at us.

All that has taken place today, and for the last couple days, has said to this nation what standards we are setting. It is still a law in Trinidad and Tobago that people are innocent until proven guilty. It is still law, but in this House it is a dangerous thing. Mr. Speaker, I beg of you, I beg of you, to help just change the atmosphere, so that when our children and our citizens look at this House and they visit or they see us on television, they can be proud and say, “These are the people that really stand as our representatives, as the images that we want portrayed.”

Mr. Sharma: Say the word! Say the word! Preach!

Hon. Member: Preach!

Hon. R. Samuel: One of the things that we do not want is double standards. What we do not want is like what happened in the Bible with a woman who was caught in adultery. I remember the Member for Port of Spain South said that she wanted to hear the preacher.

Miss Mc Donald: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. R. Samuel: No, you wanted to hear the preacher. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: “Is you ask for him.” [*Laughter*]

Hon. R. Samuel: “Da’ is all right; we relate well. We relate good; doh take dem on.” [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Indarsingh: “Yuh want to run out of de church now?”

Mr. De Couteau: “Yuh run out de church now? Yuh doh want to pay no collection.” [*Laughter*]

Hon. R. Samuel: There was a story about a woman who was caught in adultery, and the Jews and the religious people of the day brought her to Jesus.

Loss of Confidence in the Government
[HON R. SAMUEL]

Wednesday, May 22, 2013

They accused her and said, “We found her and we caught her in adultery,” but not in honesty, because according to the laws of the land the two persons should have been brought, not just one. So they brought one person, and it exhibited the bias that was taking place immediately. When they brought that lady to Jesus, they tried to trick him to test him to see if he would go against the laws of Moses. What took place all of us need to learn.

Jesus stopped for a while, bent down, wrote on the ground and then he got up, turned to them and said, “He that is without sin, cast the first stone,” and they all with their stones began to move away. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Members: Stones in hand? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. R. Samuel: They started to go away. [*Laughter*] He turned to the woman and said, “Where are your accusers?” “If they do not accuse you, neither do I.” In other words, we must understand that we all in here have got to answer to a higher authority; not just to this Parliament, but we have to answer to a higher authority, and one day all of us will have to give an account.

Mr. Sharma: Not an email account. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Hon. R. Samuel: Whatever we do, whatever we say, we are going to have to give an account. I know sometimes it is tough in here and sometimes we sit and it may get a little tense, a little boring.

Mr. Sharma: Not today. [*Laughter*]

Hon. R. Samuel: Honestly. And a little smile and a little laughter here and there, but sometimes we trip, and then we start to try to assassinate people’s character and attack people. That is not what the nation needs to see.

Mr. Speaker, we have got to be careful that this House is not also being part of the problem on the outside, where we are not teaching people how to deal with issues, where we are not sharing with our young people how they can deliberate without becoming violent, how they can respect each other. We have to be careful that that is not the message we are sending there, that if we disagree we get on and then we shake up. Pure hate, act normal. We may not cuff each other down, like I have seen in other places, but I am certain that they did not get there overnight, that habits grow by degrees. We have got to be careful.

Mr. Speaker, we must be clear that whatever we are bringing to this House, that our citizens must be able to understand, must be able to be clear and it must not be just the idea of politicizing. It must not just be the idea of attack, but let us look and see what is best for the nation of Trinidad and Tobago, this beautiful twin-island Republic that God has so blessed us to be a part of and to be born within.

I am quite concerned, because if what I typed in says that this email address does not exist, if I were to take that as it said, then I am here for three days debating on something that does not exist. I am quite concerned, just based upon the response I got. That is the response I got. How can I debate or deliberate on something that the server and the site that we depend on for the information says it does not exist? I am quite concerned, and the reason I felt it necessary is because I like to find things out for myself above the hearsay.

In this country we are a headline society. I am not attacking the media in any way, but we are a headline society. I remember an experience with the media—and that is why you have to be so careful—where when I took the Arima seat I was interviewed by a reporter. In the midst of the interview—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “De excitement.”

Hon. R. Samuel: Not the excitement, the interview. I am very, very careful. Ever so often the media reporter would try to fit something in there. He would say, “So wha yuh think about Miss Pena?” And I would say, “I am not here to discuss that.”

3.45 p.m.

Then he would continue asking me questions about my vision for Arima, and then he would slip it right back in, “so wha yuh think about Mr. Manning and Pena?”

Mr. De Coteau: I do not know.

Hon. R. Samuel: And I said, well I am not here to discuss that. And he kept going on like that and then the interview was over, but little did he know that I would normally record things like that. Two days after I got a call; “yuh make papers.” I said, “I make papers”? Yes. Headlines: Pastor in Arima says Pena has a gift. [*Laughter*] “I was like, what?”

So I got a copy of it and I called the editor, you understand, and I want to let you know that it was rectified, but it was never published after that, that the news reporter did his own stuff.

Mr. De Coteau: They intimidated him.

Hon. R. Samuel: Thank God I recorded it. When they looked at it and compared what was printed and what was said, Mr. Speaker, chalk and cheese. This is the society that we are living in. We are living in a society where truth—that is what we pray for, Mr. Speaker, and that is why I thank you. Truth would be advanced to the glory of God. Truth.

Hon. Member: Truth will set you free.

Hon. R. Samuel: We have to battle—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: They were looking for headlines.

Hon. R. Samuel:—with headlines and battle with people’s views of it, and they—why, because people are more interested in selling papers than selling the truth.

Mr. Indarsingh: Strangers to the truth. Strangers. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. R. Samuel: This House must not just sell stuff, we must sell the truth.

Hon. Member: Or make headlines.

Hon. R. Samuel: We must not just make headlines, we must speak the truth. And, Mr. Speaker, I plead with my colleagues because sometimes, you know, we may—it is easy to sometimes get caught up and you have to check yourself and say, what you doing Rodger? Do not get yourself in that.

You always have to be checking yourself because it is very easy to do it, but do not get yourself in stuff. You know why? Because I have two grandsons [*Crosstalk*] and they will look—[*Interruption*—I have two grandsons.

Mr. De Coteau: You do not know the meaning of the words. [*Crosstalk*] [*Laughter*]

Hon. R. Samuel: Yes, they are my grandsons. I am proud to have two grandsons. [*Crosstalk*] But that is all right. But you know something—[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: “Yuh looking good.” [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: What are their names?

Hon. R. Samuel:—two grandsons. [*Crosstalk*] Okay. The first one is Adonisia and the second one is Matthew.

Hon. Member: Tell them. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. R. Samuel: And—they would be glad that they hear they are called in the House. That is all right. At least the names of children are called in the House. That is wonderful, and they hear something good. [*Crosstalk*] But, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Other children are listening.

Hon. R. Samuel: And other children are listening.

Mr. Roberts: “And Point Fortin yuh could come there.”

Hon. R. Samuel: But, Mr. Speaker, I do not want my children and my grandchildren looking at the Parliament channel and seeing me in disgust.

Hon. Member: Diplomatic [*Inaudible*] nothing wrong.

Hon. R. Samuel: I do not want them having to grow up watching me as their grandfather and having to reflect that I was behaving in some manner or shouting at somebody or carrying on in some way that I will not do normally. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Indarsingh: You do not want to be behaving in a raucous manner.

Hon. R. Samuel: I am quite concerned—[*Interruption*]

Mr. De Coteau: No belligerent behaviour.

Hon. R. Samuel:—that as adults we send the right message and signal to our children. [*Crosstalk*] I was saddened that the children had to be taken out of the House—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Whisked away.

Hon. R. Samuel:—because of the little words that were coming across: b-i-t-c-h, e-f-f-i-n—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Member for Toco/Manzanilla.

Hon. R. Samuel:—all of these things, which I felt needed not to be.

Mr. Indarsingh: W-H-O-R-E.

Mr. Speaker: Those words have been expunged from the records, they are unparliamentary. Do not repeat them, please. Okay. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. De Coteau: Cork your ears from them. They have been expunged.

Hon. R. Samuel: I was just dealing with the record. Guided, Mr. Speaker. Honestly guided, but I want to thank you for doing such. So, I want to end—[*Interruption*]

Mr. De Coteau: On a good note.

Hon. R. Samuel:—that, and encourage all of my colleagues, let us not think about what is just good and bad—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Indarsingh: With a church point.

Hon. R. Samuel:—for one writer said and I quote: that, “as the plant”—and his name is James Allen and he wrote an article: “As a man thinketh”.

“As the plant springs from and could not be without, the seed, so every act of man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and could not have appeared without them.”

We have got to be careful of the seed that is inside of us because out of it flows the plant and grows the plant. Thank you.

Mr. De Coteau: Well done! Well done!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has been a long three days. Some people believe that it was a wasted time, there are others who believe that it was not so—differences of opinion.

But Mr. Speaker, before I begin, since it was part of the debate, I want to mention that my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, not only was absent from the House with leave from you, but is absent from this caucus, with our understanding and our leave in that he had the Privy Council in London in a personal matter. So we understand that; insofar as that was part of the response from the other side as to determine how suitable or unsuitable this Motion was, in fact, one very prominent Government spokesperson speaking of the Member from this side running away from it.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very unusual debate and, I dare say, a very historic debate. Whatever the outcome and how bitter this cup is, I could not ask for it to be passed from me because I am the only person in this country that holds the office of Leader of the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*]

It has been said in response to this development of this Motion by the Attorney General that ever since he came into, or long before he became Attorney General, I had been on his case, and therefore this is a continuation of a personal attack on him. Mr. Speaker, nothing is further from the truth. I have no recollection of ever engaging the Attorney General in his capacity as Anand Ramlogan any time before he became the Attorney General. It was only in the clash of offices, after he became Attorney General, that in my capacity as Opposition Leader we engage in the cut and thrust of business and administration.

As a matter of fact, I could say, had the gentleman not been holding the post of Attorney General, I would have absolutely no interest in his whereabouts or what he does for his day's work, but as Leader of the Opposition I have a duty and I have an oath of office, which I swore in this place, to uphold without fear or

favour, without malice or ill will. It is against that background that I look at the headline today in one of the papers: “Rowley gets a roasting”. Well if I get a roasting, Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that most meats taste better after they have been roasted. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, this is not a joke or a laughing matter. I am not surprised that the Government has sought to defend its Members and itself in a Motion of no confidence. If I was in the Government and a Motion of no confidence was raised, as has been before, not once but many times, the Government is expected to put up a defence and the Government is expected to show that the content of the Motion is not worthy as described by the resolution after the recital. That is normal, I understand that, but, Mr. Speaker, “I doh have a lot of time”, I only have 75 minutes to wind up—to present. I could engage everything raised by Members here. I could engage from the PNM being born in sin and raised in iniquity as part of its DNA—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: My God.

Dr. K. Rowley:—and could never be anything else in the eyes but reprehensible. I could engage that too. I could engage, and in some instances much of what they said might be true, partially true, untrue. They had issues with Chief Justice Sharma, that we had issues with the Law Association passing a resolution with Mr. Jeremie, that is a fact.

There were some courthouses not built, that is true. I understand that Devant Maharaj was not promoted at—where was he—the NLCB; that might be true. Occah Seepaul was, in fact, put under house arrest. The Maha Sabha licence, I do not know who got the licence, but there is a story that we could talk about. I grew up on O’Halloran and Prevatt as accusations, and, Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on to the most recent Pena and Calder Hart. All of these things are good for debate, and a lot of it I could engage. Some of what was said is true, some might not be true, but that is not, that is not what caused this Motion to come to Parliament [*Desk thumping*] and that is not what I am required to defend today, so I will ignore all of that. [*Desk thumping*]

3.55 p.m.

With respect to the Government’s performance, Mr. Speaker, I am sure it is impossible to spend \$250 billion in any country and not be able to show a good record in 10 minutes or 20 minutes of good things that you have done; great things you have done. It is impossible. So I know that the Government has done something good, but this Motion is not about box drain and food card. [*Desk*

thumping] This Motion is whether, in fact, we can be comfortable in going away from this place, understanding that we have nothing to be concerned about that persons in high office in Trinidad and Tobago might have miscondacted themselves.

Mr. Speaker, it comes back to that little word, confidence. And if we do what some of my colleagues on the other side are asking us to do, which is to dismiss this completely; throw it in the dustbin; walk away, because they say so, Mr. Speaker, the absence of confidence would never change in this country. What I expect is that whether there is truth, whether there is untruth, whether there is fabrication or whether there is not, at the end of the proceedings, we should be on a path which will put us to a place where there would have been action taken, and that action, by its very nature, would answer the questions that exist now, and based on the answers we get, whichever way the answers go, we will then be able to restore the confidence that we believe we might have lost when we started out.

Mr. Speaker, I am not an irresponsible person. As a matter of fact, as a politician, I dare say myself I have a good head on my shoulder, and I do not act recklessly. My 30 years in public life should indicate to the people of this country that the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West does not act recklessly. [*Desk thumping*] We are talking about this matter in this place, this House, this Parliament, in front of you, Mr. Speaker, because it is the only place in this country where this matter could have been raised in this way. I know that there are those who have a different opinion, that it may never, or should never, have been raised. I have heard it said from my colleagues.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I have come under personal attack for daring to do my duty, which is to bring to the House—the only place where privilege exists—so that matters of this nature can be raised. All I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and by extension the wider national community, would you have preferred that this matter never have come to the fore, to your knowledge, or would you have preferred to know that this issue existed in the country and warranted the attention of those who should be able to properly discharge their responsibility over it? Would you have preferred not to know about it at all, whether it is true or not true, or would you prefer to know that it has been raised, it is going to be looked at, and we will determine whether, in fact, there is anything there to worry about?

Let me go to my presentation, Mr. Speaker, because I did not come to this House irresponsibly and throw things at the Government. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, please, Members; please.

Dr. K. Rowley: I came here, Mr. Speaker, after this. As Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, I receive a lot of things from people. There are citizens all over this country who see and hear things and think that somebody should know, and the office of Leader of the Opposition is one of those places where such persons bring what they think others should know; what they think others are covering up; what they think others are doing wrong, or ignoring. So my office attracts these kinds of things. That is par for the course. And on the day when I received this, Mr. Speaker, and in the environment in which I received it—just remember, Mr. Speaker, I am not talking about this in a vacuum. There is an environment and a background against which the content of those emails would have been seen by me. And when I saw these emails, Mr. Speaker, my first reaction was, “What is this?”

Mr. Speaker, I presume my temperature dropped; my blood curdled when I saw it, because I thought, like many people thought on Monday, if this is, in fact, what has happened, then Trinidad and Tobago is one hell of a place. That is what I thought. And I did not react to it immediately. I felt a knot in my stomach that this could actually happen. At the time I was not looking at addresses. I was looking at the content of the email. It took me a while, Mr. Speaker—days. And during that period, knowing what the emails were pointing to, if they were, in fact, substantial; knowing what they were pointing to—they were pointing, Mr. Speaker, if you take them at face value—they were pointing to—*[Interruption]*—Mr. Speaker, this is serious business. Thank you. They were pointing to high crimes in high office in my country. *[Desk thumping]*

And if there are people who believe that if that is what I am seeing, and I could somehow just take that and throw it in the dustbin, on the basis that, “Nah man, those people could never do that, so this is nonsense”, if that is what they are advocating, that is their opinion. My opinion was to look at it closer and to determine, Mr. Speaker, whether anything in there bears any relationship of corroboration anywhere else. I dare say, Mr. Speaker, I saw what, maybe, they did not see. I saw certain elements of corroboration. I became even more concerned. It appears as though there is something here, which relates to something there.

Mr. Speaker, I then thought, given the nature of what it is—because, what is it? It was not an email or some emails sent to me. It clearly was a pile of emails which someone determined that somebody else should see and they pulled this email pile together, some in whole, some in part, but focusing on the content of the email, put it on pages and produced a page of documents of emails. What was

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interesting is that within the emails there was no other email that did not relate to any other subject. So it is clear that someone who thought that these things should be seen by somebody else, they put them together and they got them to where they thought they should be seen, and one of the places they thought this should be seen—at least I could speak for—is the Office of the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*]

That is why it is called whistle-blower. Somebody who sees something and wants others to know that something is happening here that I think you should know, and they blow a whistle—to blow the whistle. That is what it means. That is why we call it whistle-blower. Sometimes the action of a whistle-blower may even be illegal and against regulations. That is a fact. But it is so important that they want to get it out. I received it in that context, Mr. Speaker. It is clear that the Government receives it in a different way. The Government receives it as the work of a fabricator. I receive it as the work of a whistle-blower [*Desk thumping*] and right there we have a divergence of views. So what did I do, Mr. Speaker? Because I notice for the last day and a half my conduct became the subject of this debate.

As a matter of fact, one of my colleagues, attempting to respond for the Government, he brought props into the office—into Parliament—to demonstrate fabrication, and ascribed it to me. So now, in my office as receiver of this as Opposition Leader, where any citizen could feel that if something has to be known to this country, take it to the Opposition; take it to the Opposition, that is what the average person does in this country, including this whistle-blower.

I did not act irresponsibly, Mr. Speaker. I did not want to spread rumour and gossip damaging to the Prime Minister and the Attorney General. I did not want this to leak so as to damage. And on that basis, while I am mulling over it and treating with it, I did not share it with my colleagues because I did not want it to get in the public domain so it can become the subject of misuse and abuse. I wanted it, if it is deemed to be something that warrants attention, to be handled properly.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I came to the conclusion that it ought not to be dismissed as frivolous, and by the very nature of the matters involved, and by the people who are apparently involved, I sought an audience with the—

Hon. Member: With Ramesh.

Mr. Speaker: Member, please.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I received this document at the end of the last year. I think it was just before Christmas. I spent a few days over it, Mr. Speaker,

determining, during that time, whether, in fact, the email addresses—and let me tell you what I said here in the Parliament when I laid this out, because maybe you have forgotten. I said, Mr. Speaker, I waited for six months to see what would happen. I took it to mean that the package that I received was from a whistleblower—that is what I told this House—in a position to package and send me this. My first reaction was to ensure that it was not frivolous, and that the whistleblower had presented to the Office of the Opposition, information that should be taken seriously. I spent days trying to do that.

And one of the things I did was to determine whether any of those emails in there, in fact, are emails that are used by the officers identified, and whether those emails are, in fact, active. Mr. Speaker, the feedback I got, it was, yes, the bulk of the emails in here—not all; the bulk—relate to emails used by the officers as the document purported. I took that to mean that it is something that I should not throw in the dustbin.

And I heard, Mr. Speaker, a lot of statements by the Government in defence. The Government has put forward a list of defences as to why this document should be dismissed out of hand and thrown away. And I will come to exactly what the Government has been saying in the last day and a half. But let me tell you what I said when I put this thing before the Parliament and the country.

I said, Mr. Speaker, the emails represented to me some addresses which are known to me, and, of course, in a couple of instances, I do not know some of them, and there seems to be some kind of problem here and there with one or two of the addresses. But suffice it to say, I would make reference to 31 of them because the vast majority of them are emails from the following addresses, which again would be known to a wide cross section of the country.

Mr. Speaker, I think I was acting very responsibly. So I was not surprised at all when the Government was able to identify that there were some issues with one or two of the addresses of the emails. I indicated that. I saw the Government saying a number of things. But the one thing I want to make clear, Mr. Speaker: I am not an investigator. And it is not my responsibility; it is not my responsibility beyond *prima facie* to convince whether—as soon as I convince myself that this might be serious, it is not for me to adjudicate upon the details as an investigator. What I had to do was to determine that this matter be investigated. [*Desk thumping*]

That was my duty. I saw enough corroboration of some of the emails. I saw the addresses as used by others, and owned up to here in the House. I knew the climate within which we lived at the time, and still live, where there are

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unanswered matters, where the Government is uncomfortable. It is an environment where the Prime Minister failed to answer the President's specific questions. That is the environment in which I saw this. So I do my job. This needs to be investigated. [*Desk thumping*]

And, of course, Mr. Speaker, if I bring—[*Interruption*—the Prime Minister could laugh, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Siparia could laugh, because a Motion put in this House, a substantive Motion, where allegations from those documents could be pointing directly at her and she chooses not to enter the debate at all. The debate is winding up now. She had nothing to say in the debate; just as she had nothing to say in the section 34 repeal.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I will speak after you.

Dr. K. Rowley: As I speak about the climate, Mr. Speaker, when we repealed section 34, where the Government in crisis acknowledged a blunder, and section 34 generated so much heat in this country, we came to this Parliament to repeal section 34, and the laughing Prime Minister had nothing to say. It is against that background that I thought that this should be investigated. That is the climate in which it was.

And hear the Government—Mr. Speaker, let me tell you some of what the Government is saying, having taken the position it is a fabrication. The Government is saying, “Baps; is fabrication; is fake, throw it away”. That is the perfect answer for the Government. That means none of the contents should even be looked at a second time; just dump it because we have determined it to be a fake.

Of course, what I did not expect, Mr. Speaker, was one Member of the Government to get up here, and, in a most emotional way, point out and identify with a particular point in one of the emails and give the impression to the whole world that that position could not have been the position of a fabricator. [*Desk thumping*] So at least one person in the Government is not of the view that this should have been dumped in the dustbin by me immediately.

And, Mr. Speaker, I simply want to ask—and I am not going to ask this Government because I know their answer. They appoint a man to be a Commissioner of Enquiry, and the man, when he was exposed for his fraudulent conduct, tells the world that his CV is only 80 per cent complete. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, if he is only 80 per cent accurate on the CV, and the 20 per cent is fabricated, which 20 per cent? And the Government does absolutely nothing. The man is still on the Commission of Enquiry, waiting to sign it. That is their record.

And, of course, with this matter, 31 emails, one Government Minister who happens to have been a judge in this country, who they all call Justice Volney when it suits them, he got up here and he identified with something in those emails, which I could not have identified with, because “ah wasn’t dere; ah don’t know”. I just brought it forward so that the people of this country will have their own view on it. So let them tell him that it should be dumped in the dustbin.

But I simply want to ask you, Mr. Speaker, one could pick holes in one or two here or there, but suppose the ones that they cannot pick holes into, the content of any one of those emails is true—because by the very nature of the content of those emails, the Government has set itself a burden to prove that every one is a fabrication, as they tried to do—I have to ask you, Mr. Speaker, suppose one of them is right? We already have the Member for St. Joseph saying that he can identify with one of them.

Mr. Speaker, as I was talking here that day, and I read out—I did not spend a lot of my time reading the email addresses one after the other. But when I did mention the very first email relating to the Office of Prime Minister, I spelt it out, I heard the Prime Minister saying, “That is not my email.”

Miss Cox: I heard that too.

Dr. K. Rowley: You heard it?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Dr. K. Rowley: When I spelt out that email address, I heard the Prime Minister saying, “That is not my email”.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I did not.

Dr. K. Rowley: Later on, I heard the Prime Minister at a press conference saying that it was her email, and it was hacked. [*Desk thumping*] I also heard the Attorney General saying throughout his contribution that anan@gmail.com is not his email. But, of course, I have to excuse him at that point in time because he did not have sight of the document to see that on most of the occasions in the document—the cut and paste document—where somebody put a package of emails together, some complete, some incomplete, that on virtually every instance the reference was made to the Gmail account and the TSTT account. [*Desk thumping*]

I took careful note of the fact that the Government and its spinners are making no effort to identify with the emails of the Attorney General @tstt.net.tt, but are confining themselves to the fact that anan@gmail.com cannot exist. Mr. Speaker,

I am saying I am not here pretending to be any IT expert, except to say it is not a defence sufficient to dump this document for somebody to say, “I do not have a Gmail account because Gmail has to have six characters or more”.

Mr. Speaker, I have four email addresses, one which I use for my personal private business when I am talking and working with people. I have one for my constituency office business, I have one for Parliament business and I have another which is pretty much dormant. And if anybody knows about those four email addresses, it is possible for them to send me an email and put the four addresses out there. And when it comes up, Mr. Speaker, one of them may not be operational on that day, and the others—if they want to make sure that I get it, and they know of all four, they could send all four.

But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, my very first email address goes back to the very beginning of the availability of emails in this country, and some things may change on that. I am not here investigating and determining in this House what this is but I am saying to you, Mr. Speaker, if one looks at the very beginning of the characters used in the Gmail account when it started in 2004, it was possible then to have an email address with four characters [*Desk thumping*] and if you keep that email address—if you keep that Gmail address—you could still operate it.

In 2005, I think it was, because of the problems with Gmail at the time with those four characters, they changed—Mr. Speaker, in January 2005 Gmail changed, and since then you cannot now start a new account—not a Gmail account. So you may have had it before. I do not know. I am not saying he did. But to come here and say, and to go on TV and put up posters and say, you could never have—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, I know this House is becoming a bit heated, but let us have some calm and let us observe the Standing Orders. Continue, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I am saying, it is wrong for the Government to try to defend itself by saying it is four characters in a Gmail account, and it is impossible to have. [*Desk thumping*] It is impossible to open an account like that now, because since 2005 they changed that. But we do not know, Mr. Speaker; I do not know if he had it before, the same way I had mine before. While I was here, I received this email—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please.

Dr. K. Rowley: I received this email from somebody abroad, who has been following this, saying, “This is the email address of my friend”—a Gmail account

with four characters. This is a Gmail account from the early days that is still in use. So the Government cannot hide itself behind a fact by saying that Gmail—
[*Desk thumping*]

So that was one of their blanket dismissals. Dismiss it as fake because of that. Mr. Speaker, another point the Government raised and belaboured was that, “Look at the emails; some of them have: ‘To’, ‘Send’ and ‘Subject’, in this order, others have it in this order, and so on, and so on, and therefore it is a fake.” People who do not know—I am not going to declare myself, as my colleague from Pointe-a-Pierre—I cannot remember the phrase he used—a technomoron; I am a little away from that.

Hon. Member: Just a moron. [*Laughter*]

Dr. K. Rowley: But, Mr. Speaker, anybody who has been using—
[*Interruption*]
—they could laugh. Let them laugh. For them it is a joke. Here is a Government that is saying, “Dismiss this body of information that points to us in a very damning manner because the emails, at their heading, have changes in where, ‘To’, ‘From’, and ‘Subject’ lie.”

Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand here an email that was sent, and every time you forward it, it changes the heading. Every time you send it forward, once you use the forward operation, “From”, “Date”, “To”, would change from “Send”—“From” is not in the same place the next time around. And that happens. It is normal. That is normal. And also, it all depends on which domain it is coming from. If somebody is in Hotmail; somebody is in Gmail; somebody is in Blackberry; when you move those emails back and forth, it changes. [*Desk thumping*] So it is not a blanket defence for a Government to come and say, “Dump this in the dustbin, and do not even look at anything it may mean because the headings moved.” That happens, Mr. Speaker, as normal.

One other person made heavy weather of the fact that one of the emails of the 31 had a “dot con” ending. It is the man who is disturbing me now; the man from D’Abadie/O’Meara; the distinguished gentleman from D’Abadie/O’Meara. It was his contribution to tell you, Mr. Speaker, dismiss it, because look one here “dot con”, and there is no such thing as “dot con” in emails.

Mr. Speaker, this has been taken off the Internet by my advisors, and it shows the dot con file—dot con exists; file extension; file type configuration, and it has notes about the dot con file extension. And it simply says, “If you are having problems opening con files, you should...” and it gives you a set of things to do. “Other applications associated with dot con files...” and it gives you a discourse, and it takes you through how to—

So one of those emails had a dot con situation, which happens to do with file suppression in file manipulation, and the Government is going to come here and say, “Hey, I do not know who did it, you know, Mr. Speaker. I do not know how this was done. So I cannot say that this person did that so, and it should have been so and so.” What I do know, the final printout that came to me had one dot con email. The Government is standing behind that saying, “Dismiss the whole thing because a dot con appears to be somewhere.” That is what the Government is saying. That is what they are saying, Mr. Speaker.

4.25 p.m.

They have found—and they have found something. And I am not saying they should not do that, because the Government is required to defend itself. It is under allegations. So, therefore, anything that works in the Government’s favour [*Desk thumping*]
—anything that could help the Government exonerate itself, it would want to use it. I would want to do that too. But I am saying what they have put forward as the basis to dump the whole thing as a fabrication, that in itself is not beyond examination and it is found to be not what they are saying it is. So you can have a dot con file. You can have rotations in the heading of emails. You can have more than one email.

Another thing they are saying, Mr. Speaker, is that you could not—Mr. Speaker, I have in my possession from somewhere else—[*Interruption*]
—I have in my possession from somewhere else, not from the pile of emails that the whistle-blower sent, which eventually ended up by me, I have in my possession a stack of emails—a stack of addresses—and, interestingly enough, it is media personnel, so they would know. And in there, somewhere in there, Mr. Speaker, I see a gmail.com account, a four-character gmail.com account.

So, Mr. Speaker, what the Government has put in there, what the Government has put forward as the basis for—what the Government has put forward as the basis for total dismissal, I cannot agree with them. They choose to go down the road of fabrication, dismiss, pay no attention. I go down the road of a whistle-blower sending this, let us examine it. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, why is this in this House? Why is it here? It is because if it did not come here, it may never have been attended to. And if it is that there are people who have done what those emails indicate they might have done, it would have suited them quite well for it to have remained in the dark corner where it was until Monday morning. So, as Opposition Leader, I received this document, and I eventually, after a few—I would think—two or three weeks of examination and

search for corroboration with events known, I decided that the thing to do was to put this document in a place where it could be properly investigated, where any evidence that supports or exonerates can be made to be put to work. So that, at the end of the day, if there is wrongdoing, we can hold people accountable, and if there is no wrongdoing, it would die at that place.

So I went, Mr. Speaker, I went to the President, who as you know is the highest office in this land. And why did I go to the President? I went to the President because I understand the President to be the head of this Parliament, and these emails were pointing towards wrongdoing on the part of no less a person than the Prime Minister, the Attorney General and other senior officials. There are those who felt that that was nothing. I am not surprised that the Government spent a day and a half telling me, telling you, telling the country that I sat on these emails for six months and only now decided to bring it out, because, as far as they are concerned, the Office of President is a place of nothing. So if I take it to the President, I have done nothing.

When I started this debate, Mr. Speaker, I pointed out that I took it to the President.

Hon. Member: And what he did?

Dr. K. Rowley: What he did? Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the President, having received it in the way I received it, would have looked at it and would have come to the same conclusion—that it warrants investigation. [*Desk thumping*] That meeting with the President took place at 2.00 p.m. on January 08 at President's House. This Motion came to the public knowledge in May, May 20. Does that sound to you, Mr. Speaker, like a parliamentarian, namely me, wanting to go out there and scandalize people, and to score political points? If I wanted to do that, I could easily have sent it to the *Mirror* or the *Express* or whatever it is. I could easily, I could easily have scandalized people with it. So it went to the President. It is my understanding and my confirmation is that the President, after his own deliberation, on his own volition, sent it to the Integrity Commission. Why the Integrity Commission?

Hon. Member: Good question.

Dr. K. Rowley: The Integrity Commission, Mr. Speaker, is the location in this country where certain persons, by the office they hold, fall under the power of that body of the Constitution, whereas other citizens are not. The only people in this country who fall under the Integrity Commission are office holders who hold

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certain offices. And if they misconduct themselves, this commission is there to intervene on behalf of the State.

Mr. Speaker, let me just read for you to remind you the power of the Integrity Commission:

“The commission shall be provided with adequate staff for the prompt and efficient discharge of its functions...”

I want you to take note: prompt and efficient.

Mr. Roberts: That is why you did not file.

Mr. Speaker: Please, Member.

Dr. K. Rowley: “The commission shall appoint or employ, on such terms and conditions, as it thinks fit, any such...officers and employees.”

Mr. Speaker, section 34(1)(a), the commission can:

“authorize an investigating officer to conduct an enquiry into any alleged or suspected offence;”

I want to repeat that the commission can:

“authorize an investigating officer to conduct an enquiry into any alleged or suspected offence;”

That investigating officer has more power than a police officer and the average person in this country does not know that. Let me explain why.

If a police officer comes to you to investigate any matter and you choose to say nothing, “I have nothing to say to you”, what does the police officer do? What offence have you committed? None. It is for the police officer to go and find the evidence elsewhere to make a case against you. But an investigating officer of the Integrity Commission—to fail to cooperate with an investigating officer of the Integrity Commission is an offence in itself. [*Desk thumping*] To fail to provide what is requested by an investigating officer of the Integrity Commission, that failure by itself is an offence.

So, therefore, a matter going to the Integrity Commission for investigation is going to a place where the investigating officer has more power, and in this case, the officers who come under the spotlight are officers who are public officers under the Integrity Commission. What better place to investigate this, Mr.

Speaker? Further, the Integrity Commission has the power to cause any witness to be summoned and examined upon oath. Which police officer can do that? Which police officer during an investigation can force you to give a statement under oath? And when something comes to me that points to serious high crimes in the Office of Trinidad and Tobago, I have a duty to ensure that the best investigation is attached to that office under oath. [*Desk thumping*] I do not get paid very much, but that is the job.

Mr. Speaker, in this case we got a treatise, and I dare say, some useful information from my colleague from Toco/Sangre Grande about what the State of Trinidad and Tobago is doing with respect to cyber matters and digital matters. But he is one of those, interestingly enough, who said it should be dumped. He cried shame on me, scandalized me.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Leader of the Opposition and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. Mc Donald*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: I think it is a good time for us to pause and have tea. This sitting is now suspended until 5.05 p.m.

4.36 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, before we took the tea break, I was pointing out to you the action I took when I satisfied myself that it would be irresponsible under the circumstances to have disregarded the content of the material made available to me. And I pointed out to you the path I took with the audience I sought with His Excellency President George Maxwell Richards on January 08, starting at 2.00 p.m., and the role that the Integrity Commission could and should play in a situation like this.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind you that I said that the Integrity Commission has that power superior to police investigation, and the investigator of the commission has the power to virtually command the cooperation from any person

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in an investigation. Once a person is designated an investigating officer of the Integrity Commission, that person carries the tremendous power that this Parliament gives that office. And, of course, the commission can, on its own volition, determine that persons can be summoned and examined under oath. And this is a situation that warrants that, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, because the nature of this problem is such, it requires people with specialist skills.

This pretence by the Parliament to do an investigation here and Members can say I investigated it; one Member got up and he said: “In six minutes”—“In six minutes I was able to determine that this is to be thrown away.” And, of course, everybody is an expert in here. This House cannot investigate and determine this matter. [*Desk thumping*]

What this House can do is what the Member for St. Joseph said it should do, and I will tell you what it is in case they did not hear, because they were so shocked and pale they did not hear him. Let me tell you what he said. He said the information brought to this House—[*Interruption*—Mr. Speaker, I want protection from the Prime Minister, please.

Mr. Speaker: You have protection.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you. The Member said what has been brought to this House, what appears to be misconduct, what appears to be misbehaviour, if true, is a matter that cannot be decided upon factually by this Chamber. And I want to commend that to those on the other side who have appointed themselves self-serving exonerators of themselves. This cannot be a himself or herself to herself. [*Desk thumping*] I would not be surprised at all. [*Desk thumping*]

As a matter of fact, I am surprised that the Prime Minister did not enter the debate and said that she has found somebody who, in their own corner somewhere in the world or in the country, who has determined it is nonsense. That is very comfortable for them to do, but that will not restore confidence in this country. [*Desk thumping*] The only thing that will restore confidence in this country is an independent investigation. [*Desk thumping*]

All this thing about sending it to the police, Mr. Speaker, that is good for what is good for, because the average person in this country will not be comforted that the police in Trinidad and Tobago has the capacity [*Desk thumping*] or the leadership will to investigate this matter in a way that will restore confidence in Trinidad and Tobago. Weak. [*Desk thumping*] And we are not without possibilities—Mr. Speaker, and it troubles me more. It troubles me more when I have seen that after the sending of it to the police, as announced by the Government, that a certain DCP Mervyn Richardson is the person who is now

supposed to investigate this.

Hon. Member: Hmm.

Dr. K. Rowley: I will have more to say on that, but he is the officer who was of the assassination plot fame. Does that bring confidence to you, Mr. Speaker? Remember the famous assassination plot? That is where he is located, as far as my office was concerned and, therefore, my office has no confidence whatsoever that he should investigate. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Mr. Speaker, it is against that background that I understand section 40 of the Integrity in Public Life Act. It says:

“The Commission may for specific projects or investigations enter into contracts for the services of persons having technical or specified knowledge of any matter relating to the work of the Commission.”

This matter is extremely technical, it is very specific, and I know that the country can only be well served if the proper investigators are asked to investigate it.

Let me ask you a question, Mr. Speaker: If we are talking about investigation, are you not talking about evidence and preservation of evidence? The Prime Minister is telling the country in news conferences that she has sent the police commissioner a request to investigate it. Has she sent him her BlackBerry or any BlackBerries involved in the statement there?

Hon. Member: You should send yours.

Dr. K. Rowley: My name is not there. [*Desk thumping*] If my name was there, Mr. Speaker, I would have gladly handed up my iPad and my BlackBerry. [*Desk thumping*] Do not come and tell me that you have sent it to the police while you hold on to the evidence base because evidence tampering is a normal thing. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I rise—I cannot hear what the leader is saying; 40 (b) and (c), please, I cannot hear.

Hon. Member: I cannot hear either.

Mr. Speaker: All right, okay. Members, please, Members, all of us would like to hear and particularly the Hansard reporters. If they have to record accurately what is being said, they need to do it in silence. So I seek the cooperation of all Members. Continue, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. K. Rowley: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so we are supposed to accept investigations organized, controlled by those who are being investigated.

I mean, I must say I was impressed with the Member for St. Joseph. He could not put it better, “Once there is a semblance of truth coming out of the whole body that is so intertwined, a tangled web, this warrants an investigation with the scene sanitized of the people involved.” [*Desk thumping*]

Does Trinidad and Tobago even know that? [*Desk thumping*] Are we as a people, as a nation, going to accept that these doubts, troubling doubts, are now before the population and we will accept an investigation from people who have demonstrated an inability to investigate?

My colleague, the Member for St. Augustine yesterday, after he wiped his tears [*Laughter*] he got up here and told us the details of something that he was involved in—the cocaine in the water tank in Minister Baksh’s home. He gave us the background to that, he was involved in it, but he made the point that some Government—a Government agency was involved in that crime.

Hon. Member: Correct.

Hon. Member: Um-hmm.

Dr. K. Rowley: So he was confirming that Governments can be involved in crime, not only abroad but here in Trinidad and Tobago. That is the point he was making, tongue in cheek, because we always have to listen to the COP and interpret, you know. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] And then he went on to say that when they had it all wrapped up, they passed it to the police. And what happened? Nothing. And they are telling me I should pass this to the police. For what to happen?

Hon. Members: Nothing! [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Nothing.

Hon. Member: You are attacking all the hard-working police officers.

Dr. K. Rowley: You know, Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleagues in this House accuse me of being part of some fabrication and I am involved in some—and they heaped scorn on me. I might look stupid, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Member: Yes, you do.

Dr. K. Rowley:—but I am not that stupid. [*Desk thumping*] So what they are asking the country to believe is that I knowingly participated in a fabrication or a series of fabrications and that I come to the House and I am demanding an investigation to prove the fabrications. [*Laughter*] I am here—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Please, Members.

Dr. K. Rowley: I am here demanding a deep forensic investigation, not involving anyone inside, for something which I know is fabricated or which I

participated in the fabrication. That is the mindset of people on the other side. That makes sense to you, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Member: None at all.

Dr. K. Rowley: And, of course, while they are doing that, they are telling people in the country, “Dismiss what the Opposition has said because no two emails cannot come from the same domain.” Let me send them off, Mr. Speaker, to <http://askmetaflex.com>, and they will find something about two mx records for one domain. And this is saying to them it is possible to have two distinct email servers for two sets of non-overlapping addresses for the same domain. [*Desk thumping*] You do not have to believe me, I am not an expert. I am not an expert but if this doubt exists and if this is what is being said against what they are saying to us, then it has to be investigated by experts for a definitive outcome because if you notice, Mr. Speaker—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Members, please, I am asking Members, I am appealing to Members, the Hansard reporter is having some challenges. Could we allow the Member to speak in silence? Continue, hon. Leader.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, for the last two days the Government has been putting up veils of doubt to stand behind to say dismiss this thing in its entirety. One of the emails, Mr. Speaker, the one of June 19, sorry, of May—of September—September 19, 2012—I think it was the last email, the final email, and if I may read for you, Mr. Speaker, what it says.

I hear the Leader of Government Business talking about backfitting or backdating emails. That is his interpretation. The Member for St. Joseph does not think that that one was backdated. [*Desk thumping*] The last email I raised in this House, email No. 31, which as well as recording gmail.com also had anan@tstt.net.tt, which he acknowledged is his email, that email says, “But don’t worry”—it is the last line—“we will chat tomorrow and finalize plans for that girl.” That girl was the reporter at the *Guardian*. This is the 19th, they finalized plans for the *Guardian* and, lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, on the 21st, now the email that the fabricator is operating on, according to them, away in his little fabricating corner, on the 19th there is a promise to deal with the girl of the *Guardian*.

On the 21st, a pre-action protocol goes from a law firm to the *Guardian* from the people who had said on the 19th that they will deal with the girl and the *Guardian*. [*Interruption*] The investigator will know. It goes from the—a pre-action protocol goes to the *Guardian*.

Hon. Member: From who?

Dr. K. Rowley: It goes to the *Guardian* from—who is the pre-action protocolist in this country? The Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago—goes from him to the *Guardian*. The threat that we saw in the emails on the 19th, the threat that we saw in the emails on the 19th, I do not know if they have any link but I am telling you, I am telling you, Mr. Speaker, what history shows. On the 21st, a protocol letter is dated to the *Guardian*. [Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin West, could you? Hon. Members, may I appeal again to allow the Member to speak in silence. Continue, Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I do not know why they are disturbing me because this is not the only one place we will talk. We will talk elsewhere as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am saying to you we see in the email file, as put together by the whistle-blower, this ending of a communication that they will deal with the girl of the *Guardian*. Forty-eight hours later there is a pre-action protocol going to the *Guardian* from the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago, whose email has been identified in these proceedings and owned up to by him. That email gets on the Facebook site the following day, and the Facebook crowd is out there now working it. It is all there. And it gets to the *Guardian*, received on the 25th.

5.20 p.m.

So between the 19th and the 25th, you start with a promise to treat with it, a lawyer being briefed, a pre-action protocol is issued, the Facebook crowd is organized on the 22nd. It is all there on the Internet, go look for it, it is there, do not take my word for it. And then the *Guardian* receives it on the 25th. Mr. Speaker, in the face of that I am now to determine that there is no way that there could be anything that anybody could think that there is any connection between them. All I could say, Mr. Speaker, there is sufficient doubt to warrant an investigation.

Hon. Member: A pre-action protocol.

Dr. K. Rowley: There is another one where it promised the corroborating information that wants us to take this thing seriously. It is promised in one of the emails that “I have just sent out a release” and then a release, as owned up to by the Attorney General here, appears on his website 23 minutes later. What do you want me to think? What does this country think in the face of that? I know what they would like to happen. [Interruption] They would like us to ignore it because

it is convenient to them. I will not be surprised if they come with something today and say—or they had the opportunity to come and say, “We have determined it is not so by experts”—of their own choosing. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, I want to draw to the attention of Members opposite who are shouting at me. When Richard Nixon found himself—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: Oooh God.

Hon. Member: Yes, yes. *[Crosstalk]*

Dr. K. Rowley: When Richard Nixon, a Republican party leader, President, White House, found himself in trouble—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Roberts: What he said?

Dr. K. Rowley:—his colleagues did not all rally around him and say, “We will defend you”, whatever. They said, “This warrants an investigation”, and the investigation proceeded at length from stage to stage even through the US Supreme Court, even as the President was seeking to mislead the country.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what the summary of that was:

The contents of this tape—and I am quoting here from Wikipedia—persuaded Nixon’s own lawyers, Fred Buzhardt and James St. Clair, that—and they are quoting the lawyer here—the tape proved that the President had lied to the nation, to his closest aides and to his own lawyers for more than two years.

This is what it proved, a President lying to his own lawyer—*[Interruption]*—and to the country for more than two years, and it was only when it was shown that there were not enough votes in the Senate for him to stay or not, he stayed.

Mr. Speaker, I am here to ask this House—

Mr. Roberts: To resign.

Dr. K. Rowley:—to express a lack of confidence in this Government on the basis that this Government is not of the Mother Theresa variety. Had this Government been of the Mother Theresa variety we would have given them the benefit of the doubt, but this Government has a record that is not pleasant, and what we are dealing with here falls into the mode of what this Government has been doing recently.

This is a Government that declared a state of emergency, knew that there was no evidence to arrest people and had 8,000 people arrested in this country and put in jail for three months. This I know from facts. This is a Government led by a Prime Minister who had the ability to find out and know that there was no

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assassination threat to her life, and ensured that 14 Muslim people were jailed in this country to prove the point that there was a plot, and a number of Ministers' names were called in the hoax of a plot, and the only thing that came out of that plot of the assassination of the Prime Minister was that Ministers who were then thought to be part of the target group got security and blue lights and they maintain them to this day. Interestingly enough, that is where we are sending this investigation now, to officer Richardson of the assassination plot fame. This Opposition will settle for nothing less than an independent investigation of people including—[*Inaudible*] [*Desk thumping*]

We have not only the Integrity Commission and the power to get help, but we have arrangements in place where we can, through the Integrity Commission or otherwise as we see fit, invoke the technical abilities of persons or countries abroad who can provide us with the requisite technical expertise so that we can look into this matter, into its dark recesses to be able, one day soon, to say on the basis of independent analysis, independent probing, we have found that this has no basis, or that we have found that it has and there are people to be held accountable. What this country cannot countenance is people who are supposed to be the targets of the allegations, whatever the origin, taking the position that we have decided that we are innocent. [*Interruption*]

That is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. Unacceptable! And I am hearing from my colleague, the Member for Toco/Sangre Grande, who has a lot to say, whether I am prepared to resign. I do not resign when I have done my job well.

Miss Mc Donald: Aah. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. K. Rowley: The mentality is that if the police go to court with a case against somebody and the case is not won he should resign.

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Dr. K. Rowley: Good idea. Yeah, to please who? To please you?

Mr. Roberts: Yes. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, this country is in serious trouble when the majority of people are predisposed to believing that this is the kind of thing that the Government can and will do. In this country today there are journalists who are afraid of this Government, who are hiding their work in places away from where they live because they are afraid. Only recently—I am aware of two situations where a journalist has been stalked to the door and another one who is of the view that the reason three gunmen came to her door is because she was working on a particular story. It may or may not be so, but that is the view of

people in the media because they are working in deep, swift, dark currents in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* Understand that.

You all could say what you want, you know; this country is not in this room of the Parliament Chamber. This country is on the streets outside the way the real world lives. *[Desk thumping]* And where the real world lives they attempt to kill this off with a half-baked investigation by a police commissioner who has not distinguished himself for investigating anything. It is unsatisfactory to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and the Government must take note.

The first thing we have to do, Mr. Speaker, to begin to re-establish confidence in Trinidad and Tobago and its governance structure, is to properly and transparently commit ourselves to investigating this matter through a mechanism that is quite acceptable to the majority of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And if the Government does anything less, it would be signalling to the country of Trinidad and Tobago that its behaviour with section 34, of which this is a connected part, is how it intends to run this country until it gets out of office. It is the same Prime Minister who flatly refused to respond properly to a President who has put specific questions to her.

Mr. Speaker: Let us not bring the President in this.

Dr. K. Rowley: I am not bringing him in, but I am saying it is a fact of life on the streets in this country. Mr. Speaker, even as we listened to the Member for St. Joseph yesterday and he poured his heart out over his own pain—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Was it the President who advised the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the Prime Minister has not responded properly to his enquiries?

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I am not engaging the Prime Minister in this House.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay.

Dr. K. Rowley: The Prime Minister has failed—the Prime Minister against whom this Motion has been directed, named in the Motion—to enter the debate, to make any comment in her defence, so I am not engaging her in my two minutes.

Mr. Speaker, all that I am saying, this country could take this as a joke; *[Interruption]* they could not see the self-serving statements of the Government in its defence. They could take it as something par for the course or a nine-day wonder, but I will tell you one thing, if this is not properly handled it would

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remain a stain of discord in Trinidad and Tobago for as long as we live in this country. [*Desk thumping*] Allegations which point from whatever source, credible source, might not be credible to them, but the burden—[*Interruption*]—the doubt, the doubt, the corroboration of some of the events, indicate to the average person that this is not to be dismissed lightly. Nothing short of a proper investigation will satisfy the circumstance in Trinidad and Tobago—[*Desk thumping*]—nothing short of that.

Mr. Speaker, here is a Government hiding behind the fact that Thomas in one of the emails—it was my interpretation that that Thomas they could have been talking about was Thomas Smitham. [*Laughter*] It turns out it is another Thomas. [*Interruption*] It is not a question of true or untrue.

5.30 p.m.

We are left to interpret and make the connections—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: So you lie.

Mr. Speaker: Please, Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, withdraw that word.

Mr. Roberts: Withdrawn, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: And could you just cool it?

Mr. Roberts: I am trying, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, cool it.

Mr. Roberts: It is hard.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, continue, please. You have five more minutes, Sir.

Mr. Roberts: Take 10.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so hear the Government’s defence, they say look, it is not Thomas Smitham—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Moonilal: Who it is?

Dr. K. Rowley: There is not a Thomas there. That does not clear up anything. It does not exonerate you. We all have been left to interpret these emails.

Hon. Member: That you concocted.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, it is you, from your Chair while not entering the debate, had to point out to the Member for Oropouche East that this is not theatre—your own words. They think it is theatre. So here it is, serious matters of State, where the Government stands accused by unnamed people who see it fit to extract what they think we should know, and it is left to us to determine whether we say we do not want to know or we wanted to know. I put the question again to you, Mr. Speaker, as we come to the end of this debate, would you have preferred not to have known anything about this or now that you know, you want the matter investigated?

Having taken it to the President's office, expecting that the Integrity Commission would kick in and use the powers of that law to appear in front of people who are the subject of the correspondence, next thing I know, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is waging a public campaign about her advice to the outgoing President, do not appoint an Integrity Commission, while the Privy Council has ruled already. The Privy Council has ruled that any office holder could act up until the last day you are in office. But the Prime Minister Senior Counsel, whatever that means, is leading a public campaign on her consultation where she told the President not to appoint a commission. He consulted me too; I did not go public with my recommendations or my consultations, but the Prime Minister did. The outgoing President, fearing controversy, apparently, did not do it. We now have a new President in office—there is still no Integrity Commission.

So all the powers of this Act is as if we do not have it, and in the meantime we have this burning problem which for us is a problem and for them is a joke, but no Integrity Commission to proceed to use the powers of this Act to bring an understanding for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is where we are today. And if for that, I have been roasted, then I would have done my job according to my oath of office to act without fear or favour, [*Desk thumping*] without malice or ill will.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: Yes, he has done that. Hon. Members, under Standing Order 34(2), it reads:

“A Minister or a Parliamentary Secretary may conclude a debate on any motion which is critical of the Government, or reflects adversely on or is calculated to bring discredit upon the Government or an Officer...”

It is in those circumstances, I call on the hon. Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

[*Opposition Members walk out*]

Hon. Member: “Whey yuh going?” Boo, boo.

Hon. Member: Shameful.

Mr. Roberts: Fabricators, fabricators. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. Khan: Take everything and go then.

Dr. Rambachan: Do not come back.

Dr. Moonilal: They even walk in the public gallery—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: Yes, “yaaaah”. Ha, ha ha!

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Thank you very much hon. Speaker, hon. Members of this hallowed Chamber. Mr. Speaker, I never knew people were so terrified to hear me speak [*Laughter*] that they would abandon their seats that they worked so hard to get elected to come and sit in this Parliament—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: They abandon ship.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—and when it is that they have come for the past few days and especially on Monday, repeated again today, in what I see as a conspiracy of deception. [*Desk thumping*] Indeed, I think if there is any conspiracy whatsoever, it is a conspiracy of a great deceiver. That is what we have seen for the last several days here. And so, untruths told on Monday have been repeated by others in the Chamber on the other side, and again repeated by the hon. Leader of the Opposition today, because there is something about the—as we say, in the genealogy, I heard you say, or the DNA of the PNM, that they feel if you tell an untruth often enough—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Correct.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—that everybody will believe you. And so they came again today with untruths, Mr. Speaker, which they have been repeating.

The first is: they have said that no one on this side has denied the allegations that were made in the email. We have heard several of their speakers saying they are yet to hear that denial of the allegations. So, I want to repeat, we on this side

categorically deny and refute any and all allegations contained in the reprehensible email script, concocted by a person or persons with nothing but sinister intentions. We unequivocally deny any ownership or authorship of the emails [*Desk thumping*] and the contents thereof.

But, Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Member, Leader of the Opposition, came on Monday, it reminded me of a book, the title of a book and of a song that is very popular, on Monday, it was “Murder He Wrote” on Monday, we were regaled with a Motion of no confidence in the Government because senior officials of the Government including myself—it was alleged that we were involved in a conspiracy to commit murder, to tap phones, to pervert the course of justice.

Today, from a Motion of no confidence, the hon. Member has “back-back”. He has totally stepped back and is now asking for an investigation. And why does he want this investigation? He is saying well, 5 per cent of it might be true because the hon. Member for St. Joseph had something to say. But this is the same hon. Leader of the Opposition who stood in this House and scoffed at what he called the treacherous remarks of the Member for St. Joseph. This is the same Leader of the Opposition who said that there is a situation of breach of trust, he told the media. He said, I do not take Mr. Volney seriously, and yet today he hangs his entire contribution on the words of the Member for St. Joseph.

Dr. Moonilal: Shame.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: One word from the Member for St. Joseph and what was that word that the Member for St Joseph said—that when I last spoke with him on that fateful day, before his appointment was revoked, I said to him that I had not yet made up my mind. My good Lord. The entire Cabinet knew that I was contemplating the matter, that I was holding consultations. The public knew because the media was camped out outside. It was not that the Member for St. Joseph had special knowledge that I had not completely made up my mind as to the action I would take. It was public knowledge. That is why we spent an entire day. The Members will tell you.

Mr. Roberts: Of course.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Consulting, talking to people, trying to come to the right decision, Mr. Speaker. So that is not special knowledge only within the remit of the Member for St. Joseph. And therefore, to rely on that as being your one little thread to hang on to. Mr. Speaker, someone told me, you know, the Leader of the Opposition now, he is like a man hanging on to a cliff by his fingers [*Laughter*] and he has vaseline on the fingers, slipping, slipping down off the

cliff. And so he is asking us here in this Chamber and by extension, to those who will listen and hear and read what we say, he is saying look, what we brought here, this is valid. You asked him, hon. Speaker, to take ownership of the emails and he took ownership. So, to come here today to say look, I do not know if it is true you know, I am not sure you know, I am not a technomoron, I am not a techy, I am none of those things.

Someone said, well he might not be the first part of the word, but maybe the second, but I would not say that. [*Desk thumping*] I would not say that, I would not say that; that is unparliamentary. And so therefore, he says that based on one statement from the Member for St. Joseph, this thing has to have truth in it.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot be half pregnant, with due respect to mothers to be. It is either it is true or it is not true. And I make the point again, we totally deny these emails have come from us. [*Desk thumping*] We are supported, I am not a techy person, but from the little time that we had, we are supported by technical advice, and Members here have dealt with that. There will be more that we can talk about. But the hon. Member for Diego Martin West will not take paternity of his own falsehoods.

5.40 p.m.

I think the Member for Tobago East spoke about paternity and the refusal to take responsibility and paternity. The Member will not take paternity! Will not take paternity of what it is that he brought to this House and which he took ownership of. [*Desk thumping*] He will not accept responsibility!

In 50 hours, no IT expert in the PNM, from since Monday to now could have assisted? And then the Member brings another email in which he says that the extension, “.con”—because we had said—others had said, “.con” is not a valid email extension; it has to be “.com”. The hon. Member brings an email and said, “No, that is fine; it is okay.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have been advised—and I am not a techy either, but I have been advised to the contrary—that the “.con” extension is used to open files for people who play games and it has nothing to do with emails whatsoever. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Whatsoever! So the hon. Member, with due respect, I would say he used it very well to play games in this House. [*Desk thumping*] He used it very well.

Mr. Roberts: “Tuh play games!”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: And so, another email, coming to say about a four-character email address is correct. Mr. Speaker, if you have read the

newspaper—I read today, in fact—and let me thank the *Express* for doing the search in what they did, in putting out an article under junk mail and which it described and explained—not the UNC now, not the Partnership, not the COP, none of us—which they explained all the things that you can do with technology to create bogus emails, to fiddle with it, and Minister Griffith, I think, spoke of some of the cybercrimes and so on.

Mr. Speaker, they talk about the bogus email address now, and the hon. Leader comes today—the response to all of this from technical experts—and the Leader keeps saying he is not a technical expert—saying, “Look this four-character thing, ‘anan@gmail.com’ or ‘.con’—or whatever it is—that that is valid because you could have had it from before 2005.”

The issue is not if you could have had it, the issue is whether you could use it, whether it ever existed, and every time you run the searches—and I am not saying it only, I say read the experts—and not any expert I hired because this came out of the *Express*—is that it is not possible. Therefore when the Member speaks of an email again today—and today now I am saying, “Murder He Wrote” on Monday; today now “he talking bout” pre-action protocol letter.

Hon. Member: Yeah. Yeah.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: As somebody wants to deal with somebody—

Hon. Member: That is the conspiracy theory.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—giving us a conspiracy theory of attempted murder—comes here today now to boil that back down—“back that back down”—to talk about—and what is wrong with a pre-action protocol letter? That is a legal device—remedy—available to citizens who believe they have been wronged, Mr. Speaker, that you use the processes of the court and of the rule of law.

So we come to the email that the Member mentioned before he pulled out this—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Before he ran away.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—this great bombshell. The bombshell was a pre-action protocol letter—[*Laughter*] The bombshell was a pre-action protocol letter to the *Guardian* to prove that when somebody said they will finalize plans for the girl, that this is what it meant. But on Monday, it was “Murder He Wrote”; let us remember.

So here we are, he comes to the date, Wednesday September, 19, 2012, 10.08, and this purports to come from: to anan@gmail.com—the same bogus email

Loss of Confidence in the Government
[HON. K. PERSAD-BISSESSAR SC]

Wednesday, May 22, 2013

address: anand@tstt.net.tt, the AG's proper address, from "surujrambachan@hotmail.com. But that email is in response to an email sent by the person: anan@gmail.com, sent at 10.00 p.m. So at 10.08 this is the purported reply.

I want to say something. I went through these emails, "huh"—31. The Member said there were 32, in fact. Out of these 32 emails, there are more than 15 of them sent from the address, anan@gmail.com. That is the bogus email address, hon. Speaker. Fifteen of them have come from there. From all the information available in the public domain and for those out there, and the techy people, and even not so techy people, Mr. Speaker, you cannot send an email from that, and therefore the email, never having been sent, would never have been received, but yet we have people replying to an email that was never sent! [*Desk thumping*] Never sent! Never sent! Never sent, never received, but you are replying! You are having a conversation with a ghost person, a ghost email.

So 15 of these, Mr. Speaker, came only from that anan@gmail.com, but yet you have replies thereafter—replies upon replies. So if 15 were sent that were never sent—the ghosts—then the replies to those are also ghosts. You could not reply to something you never received. You could not reply to something that was impossible to send, Mr. Speaker.

So we come now; a new piece of the puzzle. Oh, what a tangled web they weave when first they conspire to deceive. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we are seeing here today. On the last occasion: "Murder He Wrote"—on the last occasion. He put their things together—I think Minister Ramadhar dealt with it very well—the reverse engineering, and that did not work because no one was convinced.

Today he comes with another piece of the web, to weave another piece to create doubt in people's minds, and says, "Ha, you see, when Minister Rambachan sent his email, look at what they did"—pre-action protocol letter. [*Laughter*] Take that! Take that! So "they dealt with the girl".

And that, if you examine these carefully—I do not have the time to go through all of them. My colleagues did a great job and there are others out there in the public domain who are very techy savvy who know what they are doing.

You know, this is the hon. Leader of the Opposition in the budget debate when we were talking about laptops for school children—this was the hon. Leader of the Opposition, when he talked about "duncey head" children. Do you remember?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: “Duncey head” children, the children of our nation! Today, Mr. Speaker, I am sure some of those children who we gave that laptop to, must be wondering who is the real “duncey head”—[*Laughter and desk thumping*]*—*who is the real “duncey head” because now they are computer literate! They are techy savvy, thanks to the People’s Partnership Government, that we gave them these laptops. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I had so many things to say, but I want to respond to some of the comments made. I have dealt with the issue of the “.con”; I have dealt with the issue of the “anan”, that you could create it and so on. Mr. Speaker, it is impossible to defend the indefensible and I think that is what we are seeing here from the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

I mentioned that, you know, sometimes you tell a falsehood, they believe it will be repeated. The second thing that has been repeated, not just in this Chamber by Members on the other side, not just outside the Chamber, but again today by the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, and that is why I rose and I asked him: did the President advise you or inform you that the Prime Minister had not responded properly to the correspondence?

Hon. Member: Yeah. If he was here he could answer.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: He said he is not responding to me. If he were here I would give him a chance again, but they talk and run. They talk and run! They do not take their seats that the people elected them to take up and serve in this Parliament.

So, Mr. Speaker, they talk about undermining institutions. That is right—undermining institutions, and this is what we see. They talk about undermining institutions and today I heard an attack on the police, an institution of our country. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roberts: Shame!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: It was the same for the Defence Bill when they attacked our soldiers and said they were killing machines! And they want to come—they have the temerity and the gall to come in this Parliament to accuse my Government of undermining institutions, Mr. Speaker.

You know, that is the same Member—the Member for Diego Martin West—who spoke to me behind the Chair, who said he wants to get security officers from the police. That is the Leader of the Opposition, and yet he comes here to launch an attack—

Hon. Member: On the very police!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—on the very police, Mr. Speaker. And we will come to that in a little while—a little more about that.

Let us get back to the second untruth that they keep perpetrating, and up to when the hon. Member for Diego Martin West finished speaking, just towards the end, he continued with this falsehood. So, Mr. Speaker, I will not do what the hon. Leader of the Opposition is baiting me to do. I will not disclose the contents of what was sent to the President under secret and private cover, Mr. Speaker, because if that is your Prime Minister and if one who is aspiring to be a Prime Minister believes you can conduct the business of State in the manner he is describing, then, Mr. Speaker, this country will be in serious trouble.

I remember when they called and said I did not respond to the President. They were baiting me to give out the letters I had sent, and I did not take the bait. The hon. Leader of the Opposition had said, this should never be secret correspondence; it should never be so.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if when a red phone rings in the night—should that ever happen, God forbid, as you say, your worst nightmare comes through, and the Member for Diego Martin West becomes the Prime Minister—

Mr. Roberts: Oh God! Aw! Aw!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—and there is a matter of national security, or there is a matter of extreme sensitivity, his approach is, there should be nothing confidential between the head of State and the Prime Minister.

I will not reveal the contents of those letters, Mr. Speaker, but what I would do is give the dates of the letters to show clearly that I responded to His Excellency, and that is why I wanted to know whether His Excellency had advised the Member for Diego Martin West that I did not respond properly. But he would not answer that. He will not answer that! He refused to answer—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: “He run away!”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—and ran away out of the Parliament, Mr. Speaker.

So here we are—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: “Doh give him de date neider, Prime Minister.”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay. I received two letters from His Excellency the President on this matter of the section 34 amendments—section 34 of the Administration of Justice (Indictable Proceedings) Bill, 2011. I received

one of those in December and I responded to it in December. I received a second one, Mr. Speaker, thereafter, later in December, and I responded to that in January. So the two letters sent to me on this section 34 matter were fully responded to by my good self to His Excellency the President.

5.50 p.m.

Thereafter, His Excellency did not raise any further matter with me with respect to the correspondence we had but I see in the media that this has been, from the Leader of the Opposition, become an issue of political football. I repeat again, I responded to His Excellency the President, as any Prime Minister would in my circumstances, to the best of my ability on these matters, and no further issue arose with respect to same.

We come now, Mr. Speaker—so that is another of the things that they say, if you repeat enough, people would begin to believe them. But there are other things, Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Leader of the Opposition spoke about the Integrity Commission. Now, the hon. Leader said he is not a—what is it?—

Hon. Members: Technomoron.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—technomoron; but he is also not a lawyer and he must be very careful when he tries to use law to support his arguments. So he comes here with a long tra-la-la, and, in fact, most of his contribution was about the Integrity Commission and about the powers of the investigating officer of the Integrity Commission. But he did not go to the basis of what it is the investigating officer has the power to do. He says, “Yes, they have a power. They could summon you; force you to answer.” Yes; totally correct, but what it is they have jurisdiction under the law to investigate and enquire into. What is it? And if you go to the Integrity in Public Life Act, it tells you, clearly, Mr. Speaker. And in that two seconds when I heard that nonsense—I am sorry; when I heard—
[*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: Yes, nonsense; yes, yes.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—when I heard that submission, I asked the Leader of the Government, please get me the Integrity in Public Life Act. You see, the Integrity Commission is what is known as a creature of statute. In other words, it is formulated under statute; it is established by statute; in this case, the Integrity in Public Life Act.

Having been established by statute—I see the Member for St. Joseph is smiling, because he understands fully well—when you are established by statute, you have no powers outside of the statute; outside of the Act. Your power, your jurisdiction, is totally circumscribed within the four corners; within the

boundaries of the Act, of the statute. When you read the Integrity in Public Life Act, you will see clearly that the powers and functions of the commission do not permit them to investigate alleged attempts at murder, wiretapping, perverting the course of justice. Those are criminal offences for which only one authority in this country has jurisdiction, and that is the police service. Only the police service will have jurisdiction so to do, Mr. Speaker.

So to make a long story—you want an investigation; you want an integrity commission; you know—and then I wonder, again, this hon. Member, in some ways I believe he has scandalized the Office of the President. In some ways I believe he has brought the Office of the President into disrepute, because if you recall his statements last Monday when he said that he had taken these documents to the President:

“Mr. Speaker, when I first saw the emails”—and I am quoting—“my first reaction was to ensure that it was not frivolous, and therefore. I did not take it to my colleagues.”

And, you know, today he confirmed, he does not even trust his own parliamentary colleagues. [*Desk thumping*] He does not trust his own colleagues. Imagine you do not trust your colleagues in Opposition, and you want to come to form Government, Mr. Speaker? Will not trust his own colleagues. So he did not take it to his caucus. What did he do with it? He told us he wanted to satisfy himself, and so on, that it should be taken seriously.

Six months later, he comes here to tell us about a “.com” extension, and does not know that is only something you play games with. Six months later, he comes to justify that in 2005 you could have had an email address with four characters, but after that you cannot have it, and therefore, the anan@gmail.com could still be a valid email address.

Hon. Member: “He going back to the future.”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Six months later; that it should be taken seriously. What did he do to have this investigated that he is so screaming at us today: “investigate; investigate; investigate”? What did he do? He said, “I took it to the President.” And listen, this is what I want to reply, huh. He took it to the President six months ago. And this is what I want to quote very carefully today:

“So, Mr. Speaker, after six months and the offices of State, to the best of my knowledge, not treating with the matter in the way I expected, I thought”—it my position to bring it to the Parliament.

So he is saying now the President received information of murder—alleged attempts to murder and to tap phones and to, um, something with the—to pervert the course of justice; something with the United States; to breach treaties and so on—

Hon. Member: Nixon.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—taking bribes, and so on. Nixon.

Hon. Member: Nixon-like offences.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Nixon! Mr. Speaker, if there is any Nixon in this conspiracy, it is those on the other side. [*Desk thumping*] It is those on the other side.

Hon. Member: It is him.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: So he says here—bringing the office, in my respectful view, into disrepute, because you are saying they did not deal with it. And I cannot imagine any President—any President, as a head of state, will get allegations that are serious, of attempted murder, tapping DPP phones, perverting the course of justice and all such matters. [*Crosstalk*]

I am saying any President, I cannot believe any President—former, present or future; I cannot believe that, Mr. Speaker. And so, that did not work. He says, “That is why, six months later I have now brought it here.”

But it gets a little more convoluted because he says there, six months later nothing happened, but today he comes here, the Member contradicts himself. Today he is telling us, “Well, you know what? The former President sent it to the Integrity Commission, but there is no commission sitting. So guess what? They cannot do anything.” Mr. Speaker, I would really call upon the Integrity Commission, if that is possible, to determine whether the Member is speaking an untruth; whether this matter has really been sent to the Integrity Commission. And I will also ask, when the Member referred the matter, there was a sitting Integrity Commission. This is in January. When he took it to the President, he said it was January 08 if I recall properly, there was a sitting Integrity Commission.

So to now blame the fact that there is no commission—composed members, Mr. Speaker—does not hold water; cannot stand up. So there are contradictions; there are convolutions. Oh what a tangled web he weaves when first he conspired to deceive, Mr. Speaker, and that is why I call this the great deception; the great hoax.

One other issue on these emails; the Member, today again—I say you repeat untruths and people will believe you. The Member said, when the Member was reading out the addresses on the emails, I was sitting on this side saying, “That is not my email address.” Mr. Speaker, that was the truth, and I will read from the *Hansard* on all the occasions when the Member called an email address that was not my email address.

[Member of the public in the public gallery fell ill]

You want to take Miss Patsy outside, please. *[Pause]*

Yes, Mr. Speaker; Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, hon. PM, I think I will suspend the sitting for 15 minutes and we shall resume in 15 minutes’ time. This sitting is suspended until 6.15.

6.00 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

6.15 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister. *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, hon. Speaker. And our prayers go with our sister Patsy, hon. Speaker.

I was on the point of the falsehood again coming out of the words of the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, when he alleged today that I had indicated the email address that he was reading out was not mine, and I subsequently said it was my address.

Mr. Speaker, if we recall what happened on that day, the hon. Leader read out the email addresses from the documents that he had. On several occasions, we on this side asked to see the document. The hon. Leader of the Opposition did not share with us until maybe two minutes after he had spoken. During his presentation, he repeatedly named an email address which he purported, which he said purported to be my email address, and I said it was not true.

Subsequently, at the end of his presentation, a document was passed to us, and in that document the correct email address of myself was in the document. But during his presentation, as the *Hansard* would show, the email address that he read out was not my email address, and so, we start here.

He read out on several occasions very different addresses. Kamla, k-a-m-l-a-p-b-1. He read out—hmm, it would take us a little longer to find them—k-a-m-l-a-b-p-1-j. He read out, again, k-m-a-l-a@bp. Mr. Speaker, that was not the email

address which appeared in the final document that the leader gave to us. He read again, kamlabp1. Now, it may be an error on his part, I do not know, but with email addresses, every single character counts, every single one counts.

So on several occasions through the *Hansard* here, Mr. Speaker, which is a public record now, it could be shown that the email address that the hon. Leader referred to was not my email address on the majority of occasions that he read them out. Subsequently after the fact, as I like to say, *ex post facto*, when the document came to us, I saw the correct email address was on it. So let us put to that falsehood, Mr. Speaker, let us put on record that remains a falsehood. The address that was being read out was not my address.

I want to go back to the issue, Mr. Speaker, of what is today the meat, the gravitas of—the substance of the submission being made today now. As I said, Monday, murder she wrote, “Murder He Wrote”, today it is changing to “investigate”. And to whom should this investigate—who should do certain investigations? The leader says the Integrity Commission, gives all his reasons why he believes it should be the IC to do it. And I am saying that, I started to make the point, and I really want to expand on this because that is the only new thing that came out here today.

That statute does not allow the Integrity Commission and their officers to investigate the matter such as we have spoken, the criminal offences. The functions are set out clearly in section 5 of it, and it says:

“The commission shall—

- (a) carry out those functions and exercise the powers specified in this Act;”

So, in other words, you cannot go outside of the Act and say, “Let me go and investigate an attempted murder or conspiracy to murder, or to tap telephones” and all the other things, pervert the course of justice and so on.

It says:

- “(b) receive, examine...retain all declarations filed...under this Act;
- (c) make...enquiries as it considers necessary in order to verify or determine the accuracy of a declaration filed under this Act;
- (d) compile and maintain a Register of Interests;
- (e) receive and investigate complaints regarding any”—alleged—“breaches of this Act or the commission of any”—suspected—“offence under the Prevention of Corruption Act;”

Mr. Speaker, conspiracy to murder is not under the Prevention of Corruption Act. Tapping phones is under the interception Act, and so on, so those do not fall here. And none of the other powers given to the commission—you will not give me the time to read them—but anyone wishing to verify this can check section 5 of the Integrity in Public Life Act.

So the IC does not have jurisdiction in law. They would be going outside of law, outside of their remit should they attempt to go to carry out an investigation of murder.

Hon. Members: Ultra vires.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: They would be ultra vires the statute, outside the boundaries of the statute, Mr. Speaker. So that submission, again, respectfully, does not hold any water in any debate.

So, Mr. Speaker, several other discrepancies with the emails have been pointed out. I want to turn to something I think that we really need to pay a little attention to, and even more so in this honourable Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, in this House, every Member is referred to as the hon. Member. That word, “honourable”, Mr. Speaker—you know, sometimes we are forced to reflect upon what is the meaning and implication of this term that is given to us here in this Chamber, this special word, “honourable” Members.

That word, in my respectful view, emphasizes the fundamental duty we are charged with as elected representatives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, to be truthful and honourable in all our actions and especially our words, as we execute the highest order of public service known to our democracy. That is, representing our people here, the people who voted for us, representative democracy here, a legislative agenda, and the other functions that we are given under statute again, Mr. Speaker, under the Constitution in this respectful Chamber.

So this place, whether it be the grand historic building, the Red House, or these temporary quarters where we are, this is the symbolic seat of our democracy. And so, when we come to these Chambers, we have to demonstrate, on behalf of the about 1.3 million people we represent, that we hold with them a sacred commitment to uphold the tenets of democracy which our nation and people hold dear.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, inside of this Chamber, the hallowed halls here, those on the other side unite, those on this side unite, within their parties. But the most important thing is when we come here, we unite under one banner, a banner of nation-building for Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we do,

nation-building for Trinidad and Tobago. And in so doing, we must demonstrate in our actions, in our words, that we hold inviolate the sacred trust of the citizens collectively we represent in here.

And so we are called to speak, having that responsibility vested in us, we are to speak on behalf of our citizens. We are trusted to do so to demonstrate in these halls, we must do so with honour, with principle and with virtue, Mr. Speaker. And, most important, we must do so complete in the knowledge all that we say, all that we reveal is done in the spirit of good faith and sacred truth to those whom we serve, to the Constitution, to the rule of law we have sworn to uphold, and in the spirit of justice, liberty and equality for all, Mr. Speaker.

So I reflect on this word today, Mr. Speaker. I reflect on it because I do believe that this Motion that has come, those emails, those fabricated emails, false bogus emails, and so on, I do believe that we have witnessed a violation in these halls of that very sacred trust we hold with the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

And I say this further, Mr. Speaker: the hon. Leader of the Opposition in his opening remarks quoted three eminent persons about the duty that we have and about freedom of speech. But no freedom is boundless. There is no freedom that is unfettered anywhere in the world because you heard the saying, you know, absolute, total freedom is what, anarchy, chaos. Because if there were total freedom and we could all talk at the same time, there would be chaos in this Chamber, so we have Standing Orders, we have rules. It must be kept within the confines of law and order. And in this respectful Chamber, this honourable Chamber, we must keep within the Standing Orders.

And so, the Standing Orders give us a very special right as a parliamentarian, and that is to say, as a parliamentarian we can say things here that an ordinary person could not say outside. That is what the freedom, the privilege that we have, freedom of speech. But that freedom of speech in the very way the hon. Leader of the Opposition quoted the three eminent persons at the beginning, that freedom of speech is circumscribed by our Standing Orders.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we should never use the Chamber to breach those Standing Orders, which is, to mislead the House, Mr. Speaker. We must not abuse freedom of speech and, therefore, when we come here, as I said, that sacred duty, we must speak the truth. We must not come here with deception, we must not come here with falsehood, we must not come here with fabrications. We must come here holding sacred the trust that was placed in us, within the confines of our Constitution and the Standing Orders, to speak the truth.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I find it very hard to believe that the hon. Member for Diego Martin West who ran away, indeed, they all ran away. They were so terrified that I, you know, that the Member for Siparia was going to speak, they all fled.

Hon. Member: All the fabricators fled.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: They fled, they fled, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Member: Cowards!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: And I am saying, using these Standing Orders, abusing the freedom of speech, Mr. Speaker, I started to see the points and the—I cannot believe it, and I do not think any right-thinking person in this country will believe that the hon. Leader of the Opposition would have read those emails, and just from the face of the document he would have known that they were false.

You did not even have to get an IT expert. Just a simple arithmetic, watch date and times and so on. Something is wrong, something is very wrong here. You do not need a technomoron to check other items of it, Mr. Speaker, just on the face of the document. And that is where we come to the issue of the six-month delay and the veracity and credibility of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Here we are, you see all the inconsistencies. You did not get an IT person. I remember Minister Ramadhar said, you know, I hope when the Leader of the Opposition winds up, he tells us what he did in that six-month period, and why he did what he did. All he could say, all the Member could say to us is to the President, went to the President. We are very debunked. The President has no investigative powers.

And it is very strange when the Member himself, he said, you know, they say they do not bother with the President because the President is a place of what, nothing happens, nothing happens. And then he, himself, hon. Member said that it was sent there for six months and nothing happened, so he labelled the office a nothing-happened office, and yet he is relying on the fact he sent it to the Office of the President. What is the truth? That is the point; a contradiction in terms, Mr. Speaker.

And if I may turn now to speak a little about the questions we need to ask, this six-month delay, the checking of the veracity of these emails. If we look at the inconsistencies and the bogusness, and so on, put that aside, what struck me and I am sure many others in our country have noticed it, is the fact that the leader

keeps insisting he took six months, he had these and did nothing with them. He said he then sent them to the President to investigate.

But I find it hard to believe that a Member who himself confessed in his own opening statements, said he had been here 20-odd years, he has been in this Parliament, a person who has served as a leader, a deputy leader of the country's oldest political party, who has served as a Government Minister for decades, would not know by now that the only agency charged with investigating criminal activity is the police service. I find that hard to believe. I find it hard to believe a person of the experience and stature would not know.

6.30 p.m.

Let us say even if you were mistaken, why did you not send it yes to the President, yes to the Integrity Commission and yes to the police as well? Why did you not send it to all of them?

Dr. Moonilal: Who is the shadow AG?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: So there are several pieces of this fiction that makes it look just like that, just like that, fiction.

The technological aspects, they have been dealt with, but let us look at the issue of the failure to check the veracity of the emails before bringing them here to the Parliament. Six months ago, why did the hon. Member choose to be silent for so long? You know what it is, I was thinking why would he come and tell us he had these things for six months. I mean, what value does that add? What strength does it give to his—in fact, it takes away from any credibility of these documents. Why did he say that? You know what, today he gave me a part answer, hon. Member when he said, you know what, I wanted to be responsible, and being responsible I did not share it with my colleagues, and I kept it for six months because, you know, I wanted to be responsible, I did not want to grab it and run and drop a bombshell.

But, you know I do not believe that, that is exactly what he tried to do in this Motion, the Member. He tried to create fear and panic and anxiety in our country. He tried to get the citizenry out there in panic. Listen, your Prime Minister, senior officials, your Attorney General, look at these people, my God where did they come from? Conspiring to murder, conspiring to tap the DPP, conspiring to remove the DPP from office, conspiring to pervert the course of justice. That is exactly, in my respectful view, why the hon. Member did nothing with those emails, except to come here—and I do even want to believe he really had it for six months “eh”, with due respect. I cannot believe a Member of his experience would hold something like this that he thought was so serious—

Dr. Moonilal: Cannot believe him.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—to hold on for six months. His credibility is totally is shot and gone where the hon. Leader of the Opposition is concerned. And so, why silence so long? Why not give it to the police as I said, even if you wanted to give it to the President?

So here is a trail of these emails pointing to criminality and a Member of 20 years standing, a Member who aspires to become the Prime Minister of this country, does not see it fit to pass it to the agency of the State, the institution of the State charged with investigating criminal activity, does not see it fit, and then says you know what, the Government felt I should have dumped this. The Member kept saying that you know. And again, repeat, repeat, repeat, believe people will believe you. Repeatedly saying the Government wants me to dump this. The Government is saying dump it. The Government is saying I should have put it in a dustbin. The Government said no such thing in this debate. The Government instantly when it came to my attention, I sent it to the Commissioner of Police on the same day. [*Desk thumping*] Not a single Member on this side said dump it and put it in a rubbish bin. No one said that, but again, repeat, repeat, repeat, thinking people will believe you.

But, you know, a famous President of the United States, the great liberator, Abraham Lincoln, you know what he said, Mr. Speaker, you may well recall: you can fool some of the people some of the time, you can fool all of the people some of the time, but guess what, you can never fool all of the people all of the time; and this is where the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I think, is misleading himself and deceiving himself, when he believes that he, the Member, can fool all the people all the time.

And so, I want to ask a question, is this the kind of person that anybody would want to be Prime Minister of this country?

Hon. Members: No!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Is this the kind of person that we can have as a leader of our nation, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Members: No!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: And so we come to the questions now. Serious questions arise. So had we have the inconsistencies, here is the delay, here is also why I did not check it, here are the questions now.

Well again, if he were here, the hon. Member might have been able to answer them.

Hon. Member: He would be looking at it.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Leader of the Opposition told us that in 2012, he had reliable information that the life of a reporter Denise Renne was in danger. Did he inform her of this, so he could warn her? Did he make a report as I said to the police so they may have been able to provide necessary protection if necessary? If in December 2012, the Leader of the Opposition had what he thought was reliable information that illegal bugs, taps, were planted in the office of the DPP, did he inform the DPP, so at the very least a sweep could be done to detect that if it was happening and to charge those who may have been responsible? No, he did not do any of that. Remember what he said, all he did was take it to the President.

In December 2012, he says he had reliable information that there is a plot to bait and trick the DPP into giving up his office. Did he inform the DPP of this? Again, no. Again, he says he had reliable information that the Chief Justice, the Chairman of the JLSC was perceived to be pliable and accommodating to the Cabinet. Did he inform the hon. Chief Justice or other members of the JLSC of this? No. Member also said he had information that there was a prop by senior Government officials to accept bribes and thereby evade their treaty responsibilities to the Government of the United States. Did he inform the US Government of this through their embassy here? Did he not think it of utmost urgency to bring this to the attention of the DPP and the police?

These are the questions, Mr. Speaker, I believe that every right-minded citizen must ask. It matters not what political party you may belong to, what race, religion or what space or place you come from, it matters not in what politics you believe in, what matters is that when presented with the facts you have to ask yourself if this is the action of a right-minded person who cares about anyone other than himself.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Prime Minister has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. E. McLeod*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, hon. Speaker, and hon. Members of this House.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Rupert Griffith earlier in his contribution spoke about the whole issue of cybercrime, and if I may take just a moment not to duplicate, but to highlight the importance of this.

I am advised that within the police service there is a cybercrime unit tasked with dealing with issues relating to cybercrime. I understand further, I am advised, that delays with regional and international partners in order to deal with matters from best practices purposes. So to say that the police may not be fully apprised or tasked or have the expertise to deal with these matters, maybe not, maybe they are, but there is a cybercrime unit and I sure the Commissioner of Police will do what is necessary should his resources not be sufficient to deal with the matter.

Now, it is clear to me that some kind of crime may have been committed here. It is a false dilemma, it is a catch-22. Should the emails be true, then it means that the hon. Leader of the Opposition failed, as other Members have said been neglectful in his duty to report these matters to the proper authorities; and should they be false, well, even if they are the true, it means “somebody hacking somebody emails”, and that is a crime. So should they be true, assuming but not admitting that they are true, someone has hacked into some persons’ emails. That is a crime. That is under the interception law, you hacked in. Then, should they be false, then another crime may be committed here. Should they be false—
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Public mischief.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—there is public mischief.

As I started talking earlier about fear and anxiety in our population, others spoke of DNA and genealogy of those on the other side. I want us to remember Tobago January 2013. I want us to remember Calcutta ship. Let us remember it, and what was said then by those on the other side, is that what they did in Tobago, they will do in Trinidad. On the eve of an election create fear, create panic, create fear and create panic. This is what was done into Tobago, Calcutta ship to, in an effect, intimidate people in Tobago, that some invasion was coming to overtake Tobago—create fear and panic.

We are on the eve of our local government elections here and in typical PNM fashion, fear and anxiety, panic, to traumatize citizens out there, but “God doh sleep”, he only wears pajamas. God is always great and that is why in this conspiracy of deception there are many who have been able to see the falsehood of those emails. We have seen the trail, we have seen where it is, the bogus emails, the inconsistencies in the emails, the impossibility for things to happen as

stated in those emails. God is great, I always say. Therefore, out in the public, citizens are seeing very clearly that this has been a conspiracy in an effort to destabilize our country once again, a desperate act on the part of someone who does not even have the support of his own Members.

6.40 p.m.

Many of them did not speak you know, and one was not here. I think he was on leave. That is okay. He was not here. The Member was not here. Others did not speak. In fact, at one point in the debate yesterday—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: No one wanted to get up.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is like a pack of cards. You see the cards collapsed. Opposition pack of cards collapsed, pack led by a joker. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] So after when the hon. Speaker called, well who is going to speak, no one wanted to speak.

Dr. Moonilal: None!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: We know why you know. [*Desk thumping*] Because they were told there was no way they could get up to defend the indefensible. [*Desk thumping*] There is no way they could get up to do that.

On the issue of cybercrime, I am just to say that this is an all-embracing term that describes criminal use of the Internet and we have seen an explosion as Minister Griffith has explained in the use of the Internet and, therefore, we are actively working on a cybercrime policy and Ministers pointed out that we are dealing with the drafting of legislation to bring to Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, there are some other issues which I would like to raise in this debate. We have dealt with what is happening. On Friday, it is going to be a milestone in the life of my Government and in the life of Trinidad and Tobago. Friday, May 24, marks the third anniversary of the People's Partnership in Government. That is a great day. We should celebrate. [*Desk thumping*] And so, when I made reference earlier to the fact that the hon. Members opposite, they were panicking because we have actually—I want to say overcome all the odds and all the predictions. All the doom and gloom that they were preaching, we have actually done it.

Hon. Member: Gloom.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Doom and gloom, yes. Thanks to God again, I say. We have overcome the obstacles, the hurdles, the challenges placed in our way, and we have continued to serve the people and to deliver, Mr. Speaker. I do believe that this is where they panicked on the other side. Desperation set in to try

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to derail us and destabilize us at this very important time in the history of our country. But, Mr. Speaker, we have historic groundbreaking achievements to demonstrate that our motto of serving the people threefold—[*Inaudible*—serve the people, serve the people. That has transformed and translated into deliver to the people, deliver to the people, deliver to the people. [*Desk thumping*] That is evolved into delivering tenfold, Mr. Speaker. And so to distract from this historic record of achievement, to detract from the Opposition's own abysmal failure to perform in the office, this deception, this deceptive Motion was brought by a great deceptor, a great deceiver.

You know I smiled when I saw one of the things there was that the Motion alleged that the Prime Minister and her Government, we were undermining the parliamentary Opposition. [*Laughter*] I smiled because, Mr. Speaker, I do believe they are doing such a good job of that themselves. [*Desk thumping*] They do not need my help. They do not need the help of my Government.

Dr. Moonilal in his contribution, the Member for Oropouche West, went through—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: East.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: East, sorry. Thank you, Sir. Oropouche East went through the things: failure of the other side to file Motions, to use the tools of the Parliament in an effective way to represent their constituents. So they are doing a great job all by themselves of undermining, and look at that today. Look at that today! You brought a Motion—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Gone.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: They have all left, and you know in a short while we will be taking a vote on their Motion, on their own Motion, and they are not even in the Parliament to vote for themselves.

Hon. Member: Shame on them.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: They are not even in the Parliament to vote for their own Motion. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Roberts: All the fabricators gone.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Speaker, as I say, they are doing a great job of undermining themselves. They do not need our help, but let us talk a bit about some of our achievements. Many of the Ministers here—and may I congratulate those on the Government Bench here for their tremendous

contributions, [*Desk thumping*] for their strength and their determination and their courage, for going through the hours and hours into the day and the night, staying in this Parliament in representing their constituents. I want to thank all of the Members very much for that. And so, whatever they have done, it will not stop us from talking about our achievements.

I start off with education because that to me, Mr. Speaker, as I said before, this is when our groundbreaking policy—that was groundbreaking policy in Trinidad and Tobago when we had made our promises in our conversation with the electorate, we said we will give every child a laptop. Now, they are repeating the bad news. When we talk about it, they say we say that already. They do not want us to repeat the good news, but go into the high schools and talk to those children. Sometimes I go out in public and some little child comes up to me really happy, thank you for the laptop, thank you for the laptop. I feel so happy. I wish I could give it to every single, single child, which is my plan as you know.

So we started with that groundbreaking policy. Do you know what is happening now, Mr. Speaker? Other countries in the region are following Trinidad and Tobago. They are following and seeking our help to implement that policy of giving out laptops to their students. We rose up in the World Economic Forum, in the index, when we did that in the first year. We jumped 16 points on the index. [*Desk thumping*] Sixteen points up in that index and by the time my first five-year term is done, we will jump plenty more than 16 points [*Desk thumping*] because by then every child, Form 1 to 5, will have a laptop computer. Everyone will have.

Then you remember—let me remind ourselves about it—the hon. Member for Diego Martin West said, “Duncy head children”, Mr. Speaker. You know, they talked about it in the Parliament that people will steal these computers. You know as far as I have been advised, only one—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: And they get it back.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—and it was found back because we make sure and put proper tracings. These were not like bogus and false emails. We took proper care to have these computers outfitted so you could track the computer down—and so that groundbreaking policy decision. This is one, Mr. Speaker. This was a policy aimed at poverty reduction, gender equality, propagating technological development and progress of our country; children across our nation were then branded “duncy head”.

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Mr. Speaker, it reminds me when I was Minister of Education in the last incarnation, when we were finding a place in a school for everybody—secondary school—Members on the other side said we were building schools for parrots and “douens”. You will remember that. Let us not forget you know.

Hon. Member: Biche.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Let us not forget the Biche High School which, out of spite and malice, they never opened that school. It took us 10 years after, when we came out of the wilderness, to open that school. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Nobody died from gas.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Minister Peters will know. Those children had to drive hours on the road, all hours of the morning.

Hon. Member: Leave home 3.00 a.m. in the morning.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Leave home 3.00 a.m., get home in the night and spite malice on everybody, and those on the other side—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Wicked!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—never opened the school even though we had built the school. Mr. Speaker, God “doh” sleep, only wears pajamas. So today, we have that school open, our children being educated. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, what can I say today after the presentation from the Member for Diego Martin West concocted emails? Shamelessly and sadly so, done like an amateur. Sometimes I think even my little seven-year-old grandson would have gone on his little iPad and he might have checked anan@gmail and say, “That does not exist”. A lot of our young children now will be able to do that, and there is something that says, “What goes around comes around.” It is a philosophy of karmic retribution, “What goes around comes around”, and that is embodied in my respective view of the hon. Member because those same Form 1 students as I said before are sitting, laughing and saying, “Who is the duncy head now”. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Hon. Member: That is so true.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Same children.

Mr. Speaker, it is said that when somebody tells an untruth, somebody losses and the lie’s punishment is not in the least that he is not believed, but that he cannot believe anyone else. You know when I expressed shock and sadness that

someone in this House, with the experience of the distinguished Member for Diego Martin East, could so easily—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: West.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: West—Diego Martin West, without demonstrating a shred of conscience, consideration for the public whom he traumatized—the Member traumatized with these very baseless allegations—with deception out of desperation, with failed efforts at relevance, I said it was due to the fact that in all my years I have never witnessed—I have been in this Parliament well nigh on 20-something years. I was in the Senate first and then in the House. I have been here many years and I have never witnessed such a wanton abuse of Parliament. I never thought that this is what it will come to, once more, under the same Members from the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, I have sent out a copy of the emails to the Commissioner of Police, and you know, again, the Member for Diego Martin West for six months sat and did nothing about what he calls a death threat and so on. The Member stands here and says, “So you send the emails, what you going to do now? Give them your BlackBerry?”

Hon. Member: “Yeh”.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: “Were you going to hand over your BlackBerry?” Shifting the goalpost every time, moving it on, putting doubts and thoughts into people’s minds.

6.50 p.m.

If the police want to use my BlackBerry, they could take the BlackBerry and investigate it. I have nothing to fear. [*Desk thumping*] I have nothing to fear, but again, the Member said he was not techno—

Hon. Members: “He say was ah technomoron!”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—techno-savvy. He was not techno-savvy. He was not a technomoron, because he will know you do not have to pick up the BlackBerry in order to trace them. You do not need this to trace them because emails do not lie inside the BlackBerry. [*Laughter*]

Dr. Moonilal: “Like ah filing cabinet!”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: “It is not ah filing cabinet inside the BlackBerry.” [*Continuous laughter*]

Dr. Moonilal: “It is not ah filing cabinet.”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: But should the police in their wisdom request my BlackBerry, I will certainly—I want to say something, you know. I have had the same cellphone number since 1986. I have never changed it! [*Desk thumping*] Never changed it! 1986; 20-something years.

Mr. Peters: And we get you on it all the time.

Hon. Member: More than that.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, most times, thank you. Most times, Mr. Speaker. My email address as well is not changed; it is public so there is nothing to hide. I have no desire to hide anything. You know what? Because we are in service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] I want to say I have nothing to fear, I have always said it. My hands are clean and my heart is pure. There is nothing to fear! [*Desk thumping*] If it is that there is any further information needed that is within my remit or in my BlackBerry, we will hand it over.

You know, I was hoping the Member for Diego Martin West would be here, but you know, we should not be disappointed. Should we? I do not think so.

Dr. Moonilal: He ran away!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Because really when the hon. Leader of the Opposition—you know there is a famous song, Sparrow, “doh back back”.

Hon. Member: Yeah.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: “Yuh know that song, hon. Speaker, doh back back.” I said on Monday, “Murder he wrote”, today is “ah complete backout, backout, back back, whatever it is—back down”. The Motion started off as a Motion of no confidence in the Government, in the Prime Minister and the AG and this whole Government, by today, that Motion had totally “boil dong like bhaji” as they say. [*Laughter*] It had totally gone right down to being: “Well, please have ah investigation, nah. Please have an investigation.”

Mr. Roberts: The fabricator.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Fabricator! Fabricated, Mr. Speaker. How much? Fifteen?

So, Mr. Speaker, I thought today, in his presence, I would give the hon. Member for Diego Martin West to do the correct thing. He did it with respect to

one item. You remember on Monday he said—Member said that I had spoken or was going to speak to one Thomas. When Members on this side, I think D’Abadie/O’Meara, pointed out, well, Mr. Thomas Smitham was not in the country in September, came here in November.

Mr. Cadiz: Late November.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: So I am sure the hon. Leader of the Opposition went home and taxing his brains how to come up now to answer that. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Member: “Doubtin’ Thomas!”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Now, the hon. leader comes and tells us, “No, no, no, it is not that Thomas, it is another Thomas.”

Hon. Member: Yeah! [*Laughter*]

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: So what do we believe? On Monday, categorically stating that this was chargé d’affaires, and again I apologize to the chargé d’affaires for having his name brought into disrepute in this manner—

Hon. Member: “De man wasn’ even here.”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—when he was not even in the country at the time, I apologize.

Hon. Member: “Yuh cyah trust him.”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: You know, as we look forward to having the visit of the Vice-President of the United States, we welcome him here. We look forward to the visit of the Chinese President; I believe it is his first visit since his election. Two major nation states with whom we have friendly relations, we look forward to all of that. In the midst of that, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, no paternity, no responsibility, makes allegations that seek to impute and implicate the chargé d’affaires of the United States.

Dr. Moonilal: What a shame!

Mr. Roberts: And he did not apologize.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: And that, Mr. Speaker, I apologize for that, on behalf of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago. So today, what to believe?

On Monday, it was Mr. Smitham, today it is another—

Dr. Moonilal: Another Thomas.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thomas.

Dr. Moonilal: “Tomorrow is ah next one!”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Which one to believe! But I thought in this, as we close up, that I would ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition to get up and do the right thing. Having seen all in the public domain, having seen all the discrepancies, the inconsistencies—and maybe taking a little time and check “ah techy-moron”—the hon. Member would come back and say, “Okay, I withdraw those statements. They are not true”. That he will tell the truth for once. He will tell the truth, but he is not here so I cannot even ask him.

So, I will say this to him from the Book of Proverbs, from Bosnia and from Yoruba tribe of Africa, a proverb states: “Who lies for you will lie against you.” Who lies for you will lie against you; and “If you damage the character of another person, you damage your own.” In my respectful view, that is what we got from Diego Martin West.

There is another proverb, Mr. Speaker, which would have been very useful for the hon. Member: “what you do not see with your eyes, do not witness with your mouth”. [*Desk thumping*] What you do not see with your eyes, do not witness with your mouth. [*Continuous desk thumping*] So I would have asked the hon. Member: “put your office where your mouth is today”; come and tell us the truth.

Hon. Member: Let him resign!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Tell us the truth, Mr. Speaker. There are those on this side and others who called for the hon. Member to resign, but he is very brave and strong today. Remember this is the Member where his own leader said he was “ah wajang, and ah bully and ah raging bull” and all these things.

Hon. Member: Yeah! Rottweiler!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Stood up today and beat his chest and I say, “I will not be resigning, I have done my duty”. I will not resign, but then ran away without staying to take a vote. Got threat documents that showed alleged criminal activity—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Did nothing!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—did nothing for six months, but he did his duty. Member says, “I did my duty”. “I did my duty.”

Mr. Roberts: Manning was glad.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: His turn will come. I talked about what goes

around, comes around—karmic retribution, Mr. Speaker, and what goes around, his day will come. I believe the time for the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, the Leader of the Opposition, I believe that the time for that Member has run out, his time has run out, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Because I cannot see any right-thinking person in this country believing a single word that the Member for Diego Martin West has to say again.

Hon. Member: Untrustworthy!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: We have seen here many times in the last few days other Members giving examples of untruths told by the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and we witnessed it again between Monday and today.

Hon. Member: All the time!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Between Monday, again today, right up to the end, there is the word “wrong and strong”, but the hon. Member will not admit that those emails are trouble. Instead, relies on the Member for St. Joseph, a person whom he said he could not trust, could not take seriously, calling for him to resign, calling for him to be fired, today he rests his whole case—

Hon. Member: On the same Member.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—on the same Member. What to believe from the hon. Member for Diego Martin West? Which one of these statements should we believe, hon. Speaker? My time, please?

Mr. Roberts: Ten minutes. Eight minutes and a half.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Eight and a half.

So, Mr. Speaker, today I ask about why did the hon. Members walk out? I am speaking not in breach of the Standing Orders.

Hon. Member: No!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am speaking within the confines of the Standing Orders of this honourable House. I speak under Standing Order 34(2) as the hon. Speaker indicated before I spoke. So do not give the impression—the other side may want to, again, come with falsehoods—that I am in breach of the Standing Orders. The only breach of Standing Orders I saw here was when the fabricator [*Laughter*] came to this honourable Chamber, abused freedom of speech, misled this House to defame the characters of Members of this Government and all of us on this side.

Hon. Member: Shame on him!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is the only breach I saw. Today, I speak within the Standing Orders of our honourable Chamber, hon. Speaker, and I thank you for that opportunity.

So, as I close today, I just want to keep a few words for us to remember, the words I saw attributed to the hon. AG in the emails, some words attributed to my good self in those emails. You know, that is the language of the person described by his own leader as “ah wajang and ah bully and ah raging bull”. When that Member for San Fernando East described the hon. Member for Diego Martin West as one when he does not get his way becomes like “ah raging bull, is ah bully, is ah wajang”. That is the language of “ah wajang, ah bully and ah raging bull”. That is why I will not doubt where the fabrication came from because that is the language you will see there. [*Desk thumping*] That is the language you will see there.

So, I conclude, I want to assure our citizens, Mr. Speaker, and this honourable House, that we have tried to correct the deception of the mover of this Motion by ensuring that a transparent, independent police probe into baseless allegations has been initiated. Indeed, I did see the newspaper today that DCP Richardson has said that they have begun work on the matter and like the rest of country, we will await those findings.

7.00 p.m.

But you know, we have to see what is going to be investigated here. What exactly should be investigated here, because I have said if you hacked in anybody’s emails it is a crime. I have also said that if you fabricated it, you are also in trouble, you are to be investigated. So, I think the investigation the Leader of the Opposition is calling for—calling, calling, calling—is an investigation about himself, what he found in those emails, how he found them. [*Desk thumping*] And I trust that the Leader of the Opposition will cooperate with the police in their investigation.

The Member already said to us: You know, we should send it to the Integrity Commission now because those officers have a power to summon you and if you do not want to answer they could force you to answer X, Y, Z. The Member is probably already signalling that he would have no duty to cooperate with the police. So we need to watch carefully the actions of the Member in the days to come during the investigation. One of my colleagues was pointing out, playing smart with foolishness. We have that expression in Trinidad and Tobago—playing smart with foolishness.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, whilst we await those, rest assured that far from falling, far from running to call an early election—and that, remember, is what the basis of a no confidence Motion is, to force you to do two things under the Constitution, resign and, therefore, somebody else becomes the Prime Minister and I am sure it will not be the Member for Diego Martin West. [*Desk thumping*] Alternatively—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Roberts: Praise Jah.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:—call an election. Well I am not falling for that trap or that bait. We have been mandated to have a five-year term. God willing, we will full this term. [*Desk thumping*]

Remember when I filed my Motion of no confidence in 2010, against the then Prime Minister, the former Prime Minister did not even wait to hear what I had to say.

Dr. Moonilal: “He gone.”

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: He did not wait to hear the allegations made. He did not wait to hear what it is that we had no confidence about and as you know, the former Prime Minister, two years before election was due, dissolved the Parliament on the eve of the Motion of no confidence being debated in this House. Do you know why was that? It was because we had the evidence. [*Desk thumping*] We had the evidence. That is how powerful, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, a Motion of no confidence is, that if you do have the evidence substantiated, bring the evidence.

Now Mr. Dookeran made a very good point this morning. It is that those are conversations in those emails. That is not action to prove anything. And you—I am saying we never did them, but assuming, as the lawyers say, and not admitting—know how “Trini” talks. “You know how a Trini outside there will talk to you”. Does a conversation amount to a criminal intent and criminal offence? Does it amount to that? Email is just a conversation, words. Where is the action to implicate any one of the Members of this Government? Did any Member of this Government run down the road, run behind somebody’s car? What did it say: did she walk, does she drive, does she whatever?

Mr. Roberts: File a pre-action protocol.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, a pre-action protocol? What illegal act was committed? The Motion, founded on an alleged fabricated conversation and not on any action. When we filed in 2010, however, we had solid-as-a rock

evidence, empirical evidence, which forced the then Prime Minister to call election before time.

Today I say my Government stands strong. We are committed to the people of this country and we are always ready, always willing and able to not only do service but to deliver to the people of our land.

As this probe continues, rest assured again, it shall be business for us as usual. We will continue to deliver strong economic policies. We will continue to fight crime. We will continue to seek to give the best education to our children, the best health care to our citizens, the best infrastructure to our citizens, with equality and justice for all. And that is what our job will continue.

The great world leaders, as I told, Vice-President Biden and the President of China, will be arriving shortly to speak to us here in Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago is the place to be.

Hon. Member: That is right.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Two of the biggest nations, strongest nations, both want to be here back to back, one after the other. We thank them and we welcome them. [*Desk thumping*] We have good cordial relations with them.

We will continue to deliver schools, hospitals, housing. Yesterday was it? Yesterday we started the programme, Land for the Landless. Where in the world will a government pull by lots and draw so there would be openness and transparency to give out lots of land? [*Desk thumping*] Where? That would be another groundbreaking policy that others will follow here and elsewhere. We are committed to help the most vulnerable whilst we are committed to working with the whole of the society. It does not matter what part of the country you belong to, it does not matter what class or race or space you belong to, we are committed to serving and delivering to all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

And so, life under a progressive government, under a free, democratic nation, will continue. Confidence, the type which thrives not on deception and lies but on honesty and honour, sacredness of obligations, faithful protection and unselfish performance will continue to be the hallmarks of my Government. We will continue on the path of progress and prosperity, where freedoms of all citizens and all institutions will never falter and so our citizens will continue to benefit from the rights they enjoy under our Constitution.

I close, Mr. Speaker, again, with some words from the great American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt and using his words I say: the People's

Partnership will ensure that nobody would ever deprive our people of their right to liberty and freedom of expression. Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a Prime Minister, not Senators and Government officials but the voters of our country. The only bulwark of continuing liberty is a government strong enough to protect the interests of the people and a people strong enough and well enough informed to maintain its sovereign control over the government. For we have always held to the hope, the belief, the conviction that there is a better life, a better world beyond the horizon. Mr. Speaker, that we commit to, rededicate and pledge as we move towards marking the third anniversary of our Government.

Mr. Speaker, this Motion, in my respectful view, has been a great hoax perpetrated by true deception.

Mr. Roberts: A sad fabricator.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: A sad fabricator. And so I ask my colleagues here that we reject this Motion outright as being null and void and without merit. I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put.

Hon. Members: Aye.

Hon. Members: No.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, we do not want it. No!

Mr. Speaker: Let me put the question.

Question put.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Speaker, division.

Mr. Speaker: Division.

Mr. Roberts: For the record.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: For the record.

The House voted: Noes 26

NOES

Moonilal, Hon. Dr. R.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Hon. K.

Dookeran, Hon. W.

Mc Leod, Hon. E.

Sharma, Hon. C.
Ramadhar, Hon. P.
Gopeesingh, Hon. Dr. T.
Peters, Hon. W.
Rambachan, Hon. Dr. S.
Seepersad-Bachan, Hon. C.
Khan, Mrs. N.
Roberts, Hon. A.
Cadiz, Hon. S.
Griffith, Hon. Dr. R.
Baker, Hon. Dr. D.
Ramadharsingh, Hon. Dr. G.
De Coteau, Hon. C.
Douglas, Hon. Dr. L.
Indarsingh, Hon. R.
Samuel, Hon. R.
Roopnarine, Hon. S.
Ramdial, Hon. R.
Alleyne-Toppin, Hon. V.
Seemungal, Hon. J.
Partap, C.
Volney, H.

Mr. Speaker: As a result of the division, we have no Member voting for, 26 Members voting against and no abstention. This Motion has been overwhelmingly defeated. [*Desk thumping*]

Motion negatived.

7.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for Siparia.

COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES
(MEMBER FOR DIEGO MARTIN WEST)

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Thank you very much, hon. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to read this Motion that I bring to this honourable Chamber. In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 27(2) I seek your leave to raise the following matter as a question of privilege.

The sitting of the House of Representatives held on Monday, May 20, 2013 and repeated in today's debate by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. The hon. Leader of the Opposition stated and I quote:

“I received a package Mr. Speaker...the content of the package was a series of emails which someone in a position to package, thought that this country should have access to, based on what was before us, what was being said to us and what it meant for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.”

It continues:

“Mr. Speaker, when I saw the emails my first reaction was to ensure that it was not frivolous and, therefore, I did not take it to my colleagues, I did not take it to the media, I did not publicize it; I wanted to be satisfied that what this whistle-blower had presented to the Office of the Opposition was information that should be taken seriously. Mr. Speaker, and when I was satisfied that that was so, I took the information to the Office of the President.”

Continuing:

“Mr. Speaker, I waited for six months. I waited for six months to see what would happen with the information that I consider to be extremely important, because it points...to grievous wrongdoing on the part of officers who had in fact failed to answer questions to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.”

Continuing, Mr. Speaker, of the words of the Leader of the Opposition:

“...with a proper examination and corroboration of these emails would show that the Government sold its mandate for financial gain and is in the employ of persons who use the Government mandate to protect themselves from the court both at home and abroad. It points—Mr. Speaker, this package of emails points to high crime in the office of Trinidad and Tobago.

The contents of those emails point to interest by the Proceeds of Crime Act. It points to possible violation of the FIU statute. It points to public officers who may be guilty or having questions to answer for misbehaviour in public office and that will bring the Integrity Commission into place.”

Mr. Speaker, following this statement, the Leader of the Opposition proceeded to read into the records of this honourable House information contained in a document in his possession, which he claimed represented email communication involving the hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Attorney General and the hon. Minister of Local Government and one other person who is a stranger to this House.

Mr. Speaker, the documents upon which the Leader of the Opposition relied, alleged the existence of a web of communication that sought to establish activities of serious criminal wrongdoing on the part of those involved. At the end of his presentation, the hon. Leader of the Opposition passed a copy of the documents from which he read, via the Chair of the House to the Leader of the House. Examination of the documents reveal that they contain numerous obvious errors, inconsistencies and major discrepancies which suggest that it is a wholly sham document, created for the sole purpose of causing mischief, and to maliciously lay false accusations against Members of the Government. It plainly suggests, Mr. Speaker, that there was a clear intention to mislead this honourable House.

I, therefore, respectfully submit that the Leader of the Opposition committed contempt of this House on the following grounds:

- (1) the Member deliberately and wilfully misled this House; and
- (2) the Member recklessly abused the privilege of freedom of speech in this House, thereby bringing this House into public ridicule and odium.

In respect of the first ground, it is my considered opinion that the Leader of the Opposition knew that the document from which he quoted was a mere fabrication, or at the least he ought to have known that it was false since this was plainly obvious from the face of the document.

On the second ground, I contend that the Leader of the Opposition recklessly abused the freedom of speech in this House, when relying on this fictitious, false document, he proceeded to level serious allegations of serious criminal wrongdoing on the part of the hon. Prime Minister and other Ministers during his presentation in this honourable House. This wanton action on the part of the

Leader of the Opposition cannot escape the scrutiny of this House because it has the potential to spread the contagion of this belief to everything said in this honorable House.

In light of the above, I seek your leave to have this matter referred to the Committee of Privileges of this House, for its report and consideration.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is well established that a Member making a statement during parliamentary proceedings need present no evidence as would be required in a court of law in support of his assertions. This is part of the law of Parliament, a law that we must all protect. The Chair of this House has the duty to defend and will always defend the right to free speech in this honourable House. Indeed, hon. Members, there will be no freedom of speech if everything had to be proven true before it were uttered.

However, hon. Members, I have said repeatedly to this House that the conferring of privileges and immunities on this House and its Members inevitably involves the imposition of corresponding responsibilities. I have also advised that freedom of speech is not an exemption to account to the House itself.

And so, there is before me a submission by the hon. Prime Minister that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has committed contempt of this House, for words uttered in the House on Monday, May 20, 2013 during the debate just ended, and a request that this matter be sent to the responsible committee for its investigation. I have carefully read this submission and will now rule.

Hon. Members, as you are all well aware, it is not my task to hold an inquiry into this matter. All I am required to do is consider whether these submissions of the hon. Prime Minister point to a reasonable possibility that contempt has occurred. I am of the view that a prima facie case of contempt has been made out. I do not express a concluded view on these matters. That is for your Committee of Privileges to do after a full consideration and investigation of this issue.

I so rule. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Leader of the House.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made and question proposed: That the House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed. [*Hon Dr. R. Moonilal*]

7.20 p.m.

**Indian Arrival Day/Corpus Christi Celebrations
(Greetings)**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before putting the question, May 30, 2013 marks the 168th anniversary of Indian arrivals in our great nation. It also coincides with Corpus Christi, a very important occasion for our Christian—and for the Christian community. At this particular point in time, I call on the hon. Member for Fyzabad and the Minister of Transport to bring greetings on this occasion.

The Minister of Transport (Hon. Chandresh Sharma): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we can reflect a bit to 168 years ago when our forefathers came from India. Of course, there were no emails then, there were no cellphones and the journey was, in the first instance, 42 days across the Kalapani.

During that period, Mr. Speaker, during the period 1845—1917, 147,000-plus persons of Indian origin came to Trinidad as indentured labourers. Of course, they came from many parts of India, mostly U.P., Bengal and Madras, and today, 168 years later, the descendants have made Trinidad and Tobago their homeland.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall, the hon. Prime Minister had the singular honour of visiting India as a guest of the state and had the opportunity to visit the community from which her grandparents came. What that has done has created enormous awareness and interest, and today, Trinidad and Tobago continues to benefit from the very good arrangements with the Government of India and the people of India.

Today, the Indian influence can be seen in almost every aspect in Trinidad and Tobago: from the doubles we have, from the roti, from the dress, from the medicine, from yoga, from the Hindu religion, the Christian religion, the Muslim religion, in the way we conduct business here—there is an enormous trade between Trinidad and Tobago and India and, of course, a high level of tourism.

As you also indicated, Mr. Speaker, on the same day will be the celebration of Corpus Christi and, of course, the Indian community is part of that religious activity as well. So it is really a singular honour for us to identify with the Indian community and to make sure that Trinidad and Tobago continues that very good relationship.

More than that, Mr. Speaker, in recent times, there have been a number of our children schooling in India through scholarships and through programmes from

the Government of India and through government scholarships here. So Trinidad and Tobago continues to benefit.

On behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, I want to wish all of us happy indentured—happy Indian Arrival Day and, to the Christian community, happy Corpus Christi. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Arima.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of the Prime Minister (Hon. Rodger Samuel): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the People's Partnership Government, to the entire Roman Catholic community as they celebrate Corpus Christi, as they celebrate this Feast of the Holy Eucharist, as they celebrate this Mass and this communion, which signifies and it is a total celebration of Christ's death and resurrection where the celebrants and the Christians partake of Christ's body and blood, we, as a Government, as we continue to recognize and give support to all of the communities, the religious communities, do so likewise with the Catholic community and the celebrants of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Even as our nation utilizes and capitalizes on the time that we are in and as farmers capitalize on the season where we get a bit of rain, we want to acknowledge the celebrants and the celebrations and we want to also wish the entire Catholic community and the celebrants of this Feast of Corpus Christi, a well-celebrated occasion, a well-celebrated holiday, and that may God continue to bless the entire community as they continue to feast and celebrate with each other.

May God bless them! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, Thursday, May 30, 2013 is an occasion of great national importance to our country. The celebration of the 168th anniversary since the *Fatel Razack* docked into the Port of Spain harbour bringing to the shores of Trinidad and Tobago our first East Indian forefathers.

In Trinidad and Tobago, our uniqueness as a place of diverse composition of population is something we stand proud of and for this reason we pay tribute and recognition to the many individual and collective sacrifices and undertakings that have helped to build this great twin island nation of ours. This is one of the many reasons we can truly uphold our national motto "Together we aspire; Together we achieve", with pride. Thus, Indian Arrival Day would continue to be a day of remembrance as well as reflection, and a time for celebration of unity in diversity.

May this celebration promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of all others in our multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society!

Adjournment
[MR. SPEAKER]

Wednesday, May 22, 2013

On behalf of my family and the staff of the Parliament, I join with the Members of this honourable House in wishing all Members of Parliament and the nation of Trinidad and Tobago, a happy Indian Arrival Day holiday. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish our Christian community a holy and spirit-filled celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi, which will also be celebrated on May 30, 2013.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.27 p.m.