HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 07, 2020

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[Madam Speaker in the Chair]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the hon. Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Edmund Dillon, MP, Member for Point Fortin; the hon. Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn, MP, Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West; Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, MP, Member for Caroni East; Mr. Ganga Singh, MP, Member for Chaguanas West; and Mr. Prakash Ramadhar, MP, Member for St. Augustine, who have requested leave of absence from today’s sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Police Complaints Authority for the year ended September 30, 2017. [The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert)]

2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Police Complaints Authority for the year ended September 30, 2018. [Hon. C. Imbert]


Papers Laid

Papers 1 to 4 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

5. Audited Financial Statements of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2019. [Hon. C. Imbert]

Papers 5 and 6 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

7. Annual Report of the Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended September 30, 2019. [Hon. C. Imbert]

8. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services to the Eleventh Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on a Follow-Up Inquiry into the Effectiveness of the State’s Interventions directed at Social Displaced Persons. [The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis)]

9. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Health to the Eleventh Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on a Follow-Up Inquiry into the Effectiveness of the State’s Interventions directed at Social Displaced Persons. [Hon. C. Robinson-Regis]

10. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Health to the Twelfth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on an Examination of the Current Level of Childhood Obesity and the State’s Interventions to Promote a Healthy Lifestyle among Children. . [Hon. C. Robinson-Regis]
11. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Education to the Twelfth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on an Examination of the Current Level of Childhood Obesity and the State’s Interventions to Promote a Healthy Lifestyle among Children. [Hon. C. Robinson-Regis]

12. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs to the Twelfth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on an Examination of the Current Level of Childhood Obesity and the State’s Interventions to Promote a Healthy Lifestyle among Children. [Hon. C. Robinson-Regis]

13. Response of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to the Seventh Report of the Joint Select Committee on Finance and Legal Affairs on an Inquiry into the Wider Application on Non-Custodial Penalties in the Criminal Justice System of Trinidad and Tobago. [Hon. C. Robinson-Regis]


URGENT QUESTIONS

Withholding of Lifeguard Services

(Urgent Resolution of)
Mr. Rushton Paray (Mayaro): Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of National Security: Given threats by the lifeguard association to withhold services at the Mayaro Lifeguard Station due to the dilapidated state of the facility for the upcoming Carnival weekend, could the Minister indicate what urgent remedial action is planned to resolve this?

Madam Speaker: Minister of National Security.

The Minister of National Security and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, what is happening is that the Ministry of National Security is working with the Ministry of Public Administration. Initially, a building was identified that would have been suitable. It is being used currently as Government travelling quarters. We have now been told that it is currently in use, and what has been happening is a negotiation for another building. My understanding is that all that is outstanding at this stage is the agreement of rent. They are $3,000 apart on the rental amount, and instructions have been given to ensure that the lifeguards have adequate accommodation way before the Carnival weekend.

Madam Speaker: Member for Princes Town.

Water and Sewage Authority
(Tableland Water Supply Schedule)

Mr. Barry Padarath (Princes Town): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, through you, to the Minister of Public Utilities: Could the Minister indicate why the Water and Sewage Authority has not been keeping with its scheduled supply of water for Tableland in the past two months?

Madam Speaker: Minister of National Security.

Hon. Young: I am sorry, Madam Speaker. Can I ask the Member to repeat his question?
Madam Speaker: I am sorry. It is Minister of Public Utilities.

The Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Robert Le Hunte): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the people of Tableland are supplied water via the Navet Dam which is presently operating at 70 per cent capacity, i.e., 40 million gallons of water a day as opposed to its capacity of 20 million gallons of water a day. Additionally, the network of pipes servicing Tableland and surrounding districts are over 70 years old, and due to the size and porous nature, it is inadequate to reliably supply the area.

Madam Speaker, that being said, I have been advised by officials at WASA that this area receives a scheduled supply of water one day a week which has been in place for a very long time. Madam Speaker, based on the information provided to me by WASA, the people of Tableland are in receipt of this one day a week supply. There have been interruptions over the last two months based on the porous nature of the pipes which have been fixed quickly by WASA and, as such, even if the days had to be changed, they have been able to give them back their one day of supply.

The solution to the Tableland issue, like the solution for a number of areas, is the replacement of over 15 to 20 kilometres of pipe along the Naparima/Mayaro Road. This project is presently under consideration in our comprehensive plan for the water sector of Trinidad and Tobago. When completed, based on the volume of water out of Navet, the people of Tableland and surrounding areas could expect an improvement in their water supply to about four to five days a year.

1.40 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the hon. Minister: Hon. Minister, in light of the answer that you have provided, could you indicate the
timeline that you are looking at in terms of making a determination of when this project could possibly commence?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Public Utilities.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Le Hunte:** Madam Speaker, as I said, this project, in addition to a number of projects, changed a lot of pipes, and this particular project has an estimated cost of somewhere in the vicinity of over $17 million. This project is being looked at in the context of a number of other projects to comprehensively look at it, look at—we are looking at long-term solutions to deal with the water situation in Trinidad and Tobago, and we will be looking at it in addition to a number of our projects expeditiously.

**Madam Speaker:** Leader of the House.

**WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, there are no questions for oral response. There are four questions for written response, and the Government has the answer to all four responses which we will pass to the Clerk.

**Barrels of Oil**

(Daily Production of)

10. **Mr. David Lee** *(Pointe-a-Pierre)* asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

Could the Minister provide the level of oil production in terms of barrels of oil produced per day (BOPD) for each month from October 01, 2018 to October 01, 2019?

**Natural Gas Production**

(Details of)

**UNREVISED**
11. **Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre)** asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

Could the Minister provide the level of natural gas production in terms of billion standard cubic feet (BSCF) for each month from October 01, 2018 to October 01, 2019?

**Imported Fuel**

*(Details of)*

12. **Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre)** asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

With regard to Paria Fuel Trading Company, could the Minister state:

a) the specific quantum of imported fuel from March 01, 2019 to October 01, 2019;

b) the price paid or value for imported fuel from March 01, 2019 to October 01, 2019;

c) the supplier(s) of imported fuel for the period December 01, 2018 to October 01, 2019; and

d) whether a profit or loss was recorded for the period December 01, 2018 to October 01, 2019?

**New Trade Agreements**

*(Details of)*

28. **Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre)** asked the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry:

Could the Minister provide the number of new trade agreements and bilateral agreements that were signed between Trinidad and Tobago and other countries/markets since September 2015?
Vide end of sitting for written answers.

Apology from Member

(Crossing the Aisle)

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to draw to your attention—I am seeking clarification. The Chamber was in session, Parliament session, and the Prime Minister, maybe unknowingly, walked down the aisle, and it happened in the last session where that happened to one of our Members and he was made to apologize to the Chamber.

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, we are all suffering from mis-accustom. I unreservedly apologize for crossing there. Running in a little late, I literally lost my sense of geography. Seeing my colleague on her feet, I was focussing on not passing behind her whilst she was on her legs and caused me to walk there. Madam Speaker, since that is the biggest issue on the Opposition, I humbly apologize to all my colleagues and to those on this side and to the nation. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker: Member for Princes Town.

DEFINITE URGENT MATTERS

(LEAVE)

Irregular Water Supply to Princes Town and Moruga/Tableland

Mr. Barry Padarath (Princes Town): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, through you, in accordance with Standing Order 17 of the House of Representatives, I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of the House today, Friday, February 07, 2020, for the purpose of discussing a definition matter of urgent public importance, namely, a crisis created by the Ministry of Public Utilities in south Trinidad due to the total absence of reliable and regular supply of
pipe-borne water to the constituencies of Princes Town and Moruga/Tableland for the past month through WASA.

The matter is definite because it pertains to the current situation faced by the constituents of Princes Town and Moruga/Tableland over the past month, who are being denied this vital commodity in their areas.

It is urgent because water is an essential part of the survival of human beings for the preparation of meals, the practice of proper hygiene, the conduct of household duties and personal consumption.

It is of public importance because it will negatively affect the health and lives of the citizens in these constituencies and seeing that there are no alternatives save water supplies provided by the Ministry. I so move. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I am not satisfied that this matter qualifies under this Standing Order. It would not have escaped your attention that a question was allowed under Urgent Questions pertaining to this matter. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Cyril Ross Children’s Home

Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein (Cumuto/Manzanilla): Thank you. Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of the House at today’s sitting for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely the urgent need for the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services to intervene and investigate into the operations at the Cyril Ross Children’s Home.

The matter is definite as there have been numerous complaints regarding the transparency and accountability of operations at the Cyril Ross Children's Home with many of its children ending up on the streets especially within the capital city with nowhere to go.
The matter is urgent because their physical, mental, emotional and psychological well-being go untreated and unchecked, especially those children who were in receipt of anti-retro viral medication.

The matter is of public importance as it calls for additional state resources in health care and social services without which the resulting scenario is one which impacts the country’s overall growth and development. I so move.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I am not satisfied that this matter qualifies under this Standing Order. I advise that the Member pursues this matter under Standing Order 16. Leader of the House.

Suspension of Standing Order 45(1)

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I seek your leave to move the suspension of the Standing Order and that is Standing Order 45(1) in relation to Statements by Ministers, to allow the Prime Minister to make a statement of national importance.

Madam Speaker: The leave you sought is granted and therefore I will now put the question.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Prime Minister. [Desk thumping]

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Trinidad and Tobago and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

(Details of Development Agreement)

The Prime Minister and Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, I have been authorized by the Cabinet to make the following statement to this honourable House. Madam Speaker, in 2007, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of the
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela executed a framework treaty relating to the unitization of hydrocarbon reservoirs that extend across the general framework. Madam Speaker, could I not be disturbed by my colleagues on the other side please?

**Madam Speaker:** Please, proceed, Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Thank you. And may I, Madam Speaker, for the benefit of the population, may I restart, please?

In 2007, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela executed a framework treaty relating to the unitization of hydrocarbon reservoirs that extend across the delimitation line between Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela. The treaty established the general framework under which any cross-border reservoir would be exploited. It obliged the parties to conclude specific unitization agreements for the exploitation and development of cross-border hydrocarbon reservoirs within the unit area. In this regard, Madam Speaker, the treaty provided for the establishment of a joint ministerial commission and a steering committee to facilitate the implementation of the treaty.

Pursuant to the terms of the treaty, the cross-border reservoirs were to be exploited and developed as a single unit, with determination of the area and allocation of hydrocarbons by a reservoir technical working group comprising representatives of the exploration and production companies and the resource owners. A unit operator was to be appointed from the companies, subject to the approval of the parties to develop the cross-border hydrocarbons within the unit area.

Cross-border hydrocarbon reservoirs exist within three fields which are found on the southern and northern continental shelves between Trinidad and
Statement by Minister 2020.02.07

Tobago and Venezuela respectively. These fields are the Loran-Manatee, the Manakin-Cocuina, and Kapok-Dorado.

Madam Speaker, the first of cross-border fields to be considered for unitization on the basis of the terms established in the framework treaty was the Loran-Manatee. The Loran-Manatee is a shallow-water field that straddles the maritime boundary of Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela which forms a single, cross-border unit between the countries.

The Loran-Manatee field comprises a surface area of 209.42 square kilometres, which comprises Block 2 of the Venezuelan Plataforma Deltana, with a surface area of 169.07 square kilometres and a part of Block 6d in the south-west marine area of Trinidad and Tobago, with a surface area of 48.35 square kilometres.

Exploration activity initially by state owned Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) and later by US Corporation Chevron, which held a 60 per cent interest, encountered a substantial amount of gas in the Loran field. In 2005, Chevron and British Gas, which held a joint interest of 50 per cent each in the Block 6, comprising Sub-Block 6b and Sub-Block 6d, discovered the Manatee field in the Block 6d.

Subsequent technical evaluation by a reservoir technical working group comprising representatives of Chevron, British Gas which is now Shell, PDVSA and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries ascertained that the fields were integrated. Chevron subsequently sold its interest in Block 6 to Shell which now has 100 per cent interest in the block on the Trinidad and Tobago side.

Following negotiations by the parties, Madam Speaker, a unitization agreement for Loran-Manatee was prepared and accepted by both Governments. In this regard, in August 2010, Cabinet agreed that the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago participate with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the exchange of
instruments of ratification in respect of the framework treaty and the execution of field specific Loran-Manatee Unitization Agreement.

Madam Speaker, on August 16, 2010, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela exchanged instruments of ratification of this framework treaty which action officially brought the treaty into force. This facilitated the execution of the field specific Loran-Manatee Unitization Agreement on August 16, 2010. The Reservoir Technical Working Group appointed by the parties established the gas in place in the Loran-Manatee field at approximately 10.07 trillion cubic feet of which 2.712 tcf or 26.94 per cent is within the maritime area of Trinidad and Tobago, and 7.357 tcf or 73.06 per cent within the maritime area of Venezuela.

Madam Speaker, in accordance with the provisions of the Loran-Manatee Treaty, a ministerial committee and a steering committee were established in order to facilitate the implementation and execution of the treaty and related agreements. Under the direction of the committees a unitization and unit operating agreement was developed for the exploitation and development of the Loran-Manatee field.

However, progress in the development of the field has now been curtailed in that way, by the sanctions imposed by the United States Government, which block United States companies from doing business with PDVSA. This came about, Madam Speaker, in January, in early 2019. This impacts on the ability of Chevron, an American company in particular, to participate in any development of the Loran-Manatee field. This is of concern to both the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

As a consequence of this 2019 negative geopolitical development, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of the
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela agreed to undertake the separate and independent exploitation and development of the Loran-Manatee field.

Pursuant to that decision, Cabinet agreed to the following:

1. The rescission of the unitization agreement for the exploitation and development of hydrocarbon reservoirs of the Loran-Manatee field that extends across the delimitation line between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and this dated August 16, 2010.

2. The Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the independent development of the cross-border field, the Loran-Manatee, known as now, the Agreement.

In accordance with Article 7.3 of the Loran-Manatee Unitization Agreement dated August 16, 2010, an official notice of termination of that Agreement was issued by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This was followed by the execution of the agreement between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the development of the cross-border field, the Loran-Manatee. The agreement was executed on October 15, 2019.

Accordingly, the Unitization Agreement has been terminated and will have no further force or effect. It has been replaced by a new agreement between the countries, which allows for the separate and independent exploitation and development of the Loran-Manatee field.

Under the terms of this new agreement, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have the right to develop its
own share of the hydrocarbon reservoirs within the Loran-Manatee field based on a recovery factor of 69 per cent of the estimated gas in place of 10.07 tcf. Trinidad and Tobago therefore, can produce up to 1.872 tcf and Venezuela can produce up to 5.076 tcf from the gaseous hydrocarbons in place.

The volumes of gaseous hydrocarbons initially in place, the average percentage of original gas in place for each party, and the assumed recovery factor may be adjusted based on any new data arising from a redetermination of the gas in place. Madam Speaker, a re-determination may be undertaken after one year but not later than three years from the date of first production by either party and such other intervals if such request is made, at least two years after the most recent redetermination.

Madam Speaker, this decision to allow each party to independently develop its share of the field will accelerate its development. The agreement provides for the development of reservoirs within the Loran-Manatee field by the exploration and production companies authorized to undertake such activities in accordance with their respective agreements with the relevant party.

Pursuant to the terms of Block 6 production sharing contract in which the Manatee field is located, the contractor, Shell, will be required to prepare and submit for the Minister’s approval a Work Programme and Budget for the contract area encompassing the Manatee field, setting forth the planned exploration and development activities. Shell has already agreed to undertake and accelerate these requirements.

As regards to the disposition of hydrocarbons produced from Sub-Block 6d (Manatee development), the contractor Shell is to submit a written request to the Minister to initiate negotiations to agree on contract terms in order to commence the appraisal and pre-sanction activities necessary to progress the commercial
development of the Manatee field. Shell has initiated preliminary discussions with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and is working on various development scenarios for early on-stream gas production of the field. It is projected, Madam Speaker, that gas production could commence in the 2025 period at rates ranging from 270 million standard cubic feet per day to 400 million standard cubic feet per day.

Madam Speaker, natural gas from Loran-Manatee or now to be known as the Manatee field, was not initially factored in the Government’s gas production forecast but in light of these far-reaching agreements, can now be added as significant reserves to sustain the levels of gas consumption at Point Lisas. This development will therefore augment gas production from 2025 and assist in alleviating gas curtailment that has been a worrying issue for the downstream industry and I dare say, the national economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, this agreement sets a precedent for further cooperative development of the other smaller but very significant cross-border fields, the Manakin-Cocuina and Kapok-Dorado, in which Trinidad and Tobago has almost 1tcf of available resource.

A Unitization Agreement was executed on the Manakin-Cocuina on February 24, 2015, and a draft agreement has been prepared for Kapok-Dorado. It is estimated that 0.85 tcf or 850 billion cubic feet of natural gas are located within the Trinidad and Tobago maritime area of these two cross-border fields.

Loran-Manatee Field Agreement is a landmark decision in the countries’ cross-border relationship and a major policy shift in the Government’s gas development strategy. It is further testimony of positive initiatives being undertaken by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to meet critical domestic gas requirements for a competitive energy sector and to maintain our position as a
major player in the global petrochemical and LNG business.

Madam Speaker, contrary to some disappointing but nonetheless predictable negative media headline reports, the dismantling of the Loran-Manatee Unitization Agreement is beneficial to Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] The previous attempt to extract gas from the Loran-Manatee field has been going on for 20 years without any real progress to show for it.

However, having said, necessity is the mother of invention, and we having not invented, have successfully found a way to develop our proven resource, to partner with an oil and gas major, in this case Shell, to get the long dormant field developed and infrastructure built with the outcome, in the medium term, being gas flowing from these fields on our south-eastern border to our national economy at Point Fortin and at Point Lisas.

Madam Speaker, let me once and for all clarify for the average citizen our early initiative which is commonly and even derisively referred to by some as The Dragon Deal.

Madam Speaker, whereas the Loran-Manatee field is in the south-east of our country and involves a gas field which is shared by Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela, the Dragon field which is located on the north-west of Trinidad, lies entirely within Venezuelan territory and is owned by the people of Venezuela. Our only interest in this Dragon field is wholly commercial and entirely dependent on possible commercial arrangements.

Very early in the life of this Administration we took steps to open up these commercial possibilities to allow Trinidad and Tobago industries to have access to a larger pool of raw material resources. The Dragon initiative, when completed and operationalized, will also be beneficial to Trinidad and Tobago. The deal is
still on but has been prevented from formally moving forward at this time by trade restrictions imposed by the United States Government on Venezuela.

This is a development over which— [Interruption] Madam Speaker, may I be allowed to speak in silence?

Madam Speaker: Members, the Prime Minister will be heard in silence. Prime Minister, please continue.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: [Desk thumping] Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is not my intention to irritate any person in this House, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, Madam Speaker, the Dragon initiatives, whenever completed and operationalized will also be beneficial to Trinidad and Tobago. The deal is still on, but has been prevented from formally moving forward at this time by trade restrictions imposed by the United States Government on Venezuela.

This is a development over which we had nor now have any control, but any ultimate outcome will always be one of mutual benefit to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago and all the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. [Desk thumping]

The genesis of the project was bilateral discussions in April 2016, between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This led to the execution on May 23, 2016, of a memorandum of understanding for the technical and commercial studies related to the natural gas supply and this was signed between the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The objective of the MOU was to set the general conditions for the execution of a technical economic feasibility study of the natural gas reserves in fields located in the northern and south-eastern areas of the continental shelf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and the assessment of the feasibility of
developing a gas interconnection between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

This is an initiative which was welcomed by all the right-thinking people of our country and all our neighbours. It summarizes neighbourly cooperation in our zone of peace and prosperity which we hold out to our children and grandchildren.

Technical teams from both countries were appointed to evaluate the feasibility of the supply of gas and in particular the Dragon field, from Venezuela to Trinidad. Following a successful review of the project, a Government-to-Government agreement on the implementation of a gas interconnection project between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was finalized. This agreement was signed in Caracas on the visit of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and President Maduro on December 05, 2016.

On January 15, 2017, a heads of agreement was executed among NGC, Venezuelan stated-owned PDVSA, and Shell for the extraction of gas from the Dragon field for supply to domestic and LNG industries in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, for some strange reason that historic development displeased some people within our border. Madam Speaker, first gas was projected for 2023 at an initial production rate of 330 million standard cubic feet per day, increasing to 500 million standard cubic feet per day at peak production. A term sheet, which sets out the commercial terms for the project, has been finalized and agreed by the participating entities, NGC, PDVSA and Shell.

Discussions commenced on the terms of a gas sales agreement. However, further progress has been stymied by US trade sanctions which have escalated and which target transactions with PDVSA. Notwithstanding, Madam Speaker, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of the
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela are continuing our collaboration on the premise that the trade restrictions on Venezuela will be lifted sometime, in due course.

2.10 p.m.

Madam Speaker, the action by the Government in these matters is a clear indication of our commitment and resolve to attain a sustainable domestic gas industry. We are on the right track as the positive results show that we are getting the job done. I thank you, Madam Speaker. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: [Desk thumping] Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Just one question hon. Prime Minister. Will the financing of the project involving the Loran-Manatee Field be done by Shell or by Shell and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, there was a time when we could have answered that question with a smile on our face, but as you would have heard earlier, Madam Speaker, that the $16 billion at NGC, which was aimed at financing this kind of development, was frittered away by the last Government, and now NGC has no money. [Interruption] NGC has no money to invest like this, but if it is required for NGC to borrow to take part in it we will, and we have an undertaking from Shell that the financing would be available from Shell.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT

Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill, 2016

(Adoption)

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Be it resolved that this House adopt the report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Gambling (Gaming and Betting)
Control Bill 2016.

Just one second Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this Bill has had a long and torturous history, the Bill that forms part of this report. When one looks at the history of various attempts by Governments to amend our legislation relating to gambling and betting, one sees that as far back as 1999 there was a Gambling (Gaming and Betting) (Amdt.) Bill laid in this House. That Bill subsequently lapsed on the dissolution of Parliament to make way for the 2000 election. So that Bill never saw the light of the day. In 2001, when the very short-lived UNC Government returned for a small period, another Bill was laid in September 2001, an amendment to the gambling and betting Act. That lapsed one month later when that UNC Government crashed out of office in 2001. In 2015, just before our predecessors also crashed out of office, on the 22nd of May 2015, a Bill entitled the Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill, 2015, was laid on the 22nd of May 2015, lapsed on the 17th of June 2015, when the Parliament was dissolved.

So that there have been attempts to reform our gambling and gaming sector since 1999, but all attempts by previous administrations have met with no success. In 2016 we—this Administration—we re-laid the identical Bill, the Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill, 2015, the exact same Bill that had been laid by the former administration, we laid it in 2016, word for word. We did not change a full stop or a semicolon, and this Bill was eventually sent to a joint select committee in February of 2017.

A joint select committee was established. The members of that committee were myself as chairman, Mr. Al-Rawi, Mr. Young, Ms. Olivierre, Mr Singh, Mr. Indarsingh, Ms. Ramkissoon, Mr. Cummings, Mr. Coppin, Mr. Mark, Ms. Gopee-Scoon and Mr. Richards. So in 2017, a committee was established.

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The committee first met on February the 13th, well, that was a procedural meeting, and then the committee met on the 21st of February, 2017; the 13th of March, 2017; the 5th of April, 2017; the 26th of May, 2017; the 5th of September 2017; the 6th of September 2017; and the 13th of September 2017. So the committee met on numerous occasions in 2017, and reported to Parliament during that period.

It was agreed by the committee that there should be the participation of stakeholders so that the committee sought and obtained written submissions from the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, the Bankers Association of Trinidad and Tobago, the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers’ Association, the Trinidad and Tobago Members Club Association, the Betting Levy Board, the Union of Member Clubs and Lottery Workers, Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, the Board of Inland Revenue, the Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago, the Commissioner of Police, Customs and Excise Division, the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority, Hamel Smith attorney-at-laws, Royal Princess Casino Royal Club, Mr. DeFour for the Grace Connection, Chico Enterprises Ltd., Ms. Nunez for Eye on Dependency, Duces Private Members’ Club, Amusement Gaming Association, MaPau Members Club, and also some members of the public, and Mr. Sooklal, Mr. Ramnarine, and Ms. Ramsingh, Ms. Espinoza, Mr. Jackson, Mr. Sookham, and Mr. Pariag.

The committee then held discussions with a number of stakeholders including Bankers Association, the Financial Intelligence Unit, Central Bank, Members Club Association, Integrity Commission, Betting Levy Board, MaPau Members Club, Union of Members Club and Lottery Workers, Mr. Sooklal, the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority, Grace Connection, Eye on Dependency, Princess Entertainment Corporation, Bookmakers Association, Association for Amusement
Gaming Machines, Customs and Excise, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. And during these meetings, these comprehensive meetings, a number of issues were raised with respect to a review of definitions and terms contained in the Bill, the revisiting of the criteria of a fit and proper test of a person employed within the industry, issues relating to problem gambling, gambling addiction, et cetera, whether board members should be appointed by the line Minister, the impact of the Bill on the horse racing industry and amusement gaming industry, restrictions on horse racing, whether the responsibilities given to police officers in the Bill should also be given to municipal police officers, the ability of operators in the racing industry to pay moneys into the Consolidated Fund, the sanctions and so on.

The committee also agreed an expert consultant was necessary. We received 15 applications, and eventually the firm of Governance Associates was selected, they having no conflict of interest and they being world experts in this field. We went right through 2017 with this, and the Parliament was approaching prorogation and therefore the matter was carried over into the 2018 session. We continued in 2018, we continued in 2019, and after years—we are talking from 2017 to 2019—of consideration, meetings, consultation, we had video conferences with our experts, one was in Australia, one was in London, world experts in this industry. Many questions were asked by members of the committee including Opposition Members and Independent Senators, and answers were given to every question. In particular, Madam Speaker, we also prepared regulations.

These regulations—and I want to deal with this immediately, because during one of the meetings an Opposition Member who had dragged out the proceedings for over a year insisting on consultation with all these people, that Opposition Member who had dragged out the meeting for over a year, said they want to see the
regulations, and that Opposition Member was reminded that regulations were first circulated to Members on Monday the 13th of March, 2017, almost three years ago. Yes, three years ago. So one year after, or two years after the regulations were circulated to the members, a member, an Opposition Member, wanted to see the regulations, and of course accused us of not having any regulations. Stakeholders were informed on the 28th of March 2017, that the draft regulations were available on the Parliament's website, and they were asked to review, and when they came to be interviewed by the committee to provide submissions on both the Bill and the regulations.

The members of the committee continued to question the regulations, so the committee expanded its work, forwarded the regulations to the international consultants for renew and analysis, and we continued the committee into November 2019. So that in that meeting—in 2019 we revisited the regulations again. We had been looking at these regulations by that time for two and a half years. On the 15th of November, 2019, the committee met by video conference with our international expert to go through every single regulation, and Mr. Clark, our consultant, made observations and put forward suggestions to strengthen the regulations. May I say at this time, Madam Speaker, that these regulations are for affirmative resolution, and therefore the Bill will have to be passed first and then we debate the regulations for affirmative resolution, and clearly all parts of the Bill cannot be proclaimed until the regulations have been debated and passed in this House.

Now let me go to the Bill itself. I am advised, Madam Speaker, that notwithstanding the fact we have been at this for four years, that Members opposite, we have been at this for four years in a Joint Select Committee where
everybody has participated, the Opposition has participated, the Independent bench has participated. We have had sessions in public, we had sessions in private, we have answered every single question, we have interviewed every single interested party, and we have been looking at regulations for almost three years.

So, Madam Speaker, now let me present the Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill for the second time in this House. This is not the first time. There has been an urgent need in this country to update existing gambling legislation. This is well established, and you can see governments have been trying to do this since 1999. The gambling sector is currently governed by four distinct pieces of legislation, none of which has been able to keep up the significant expansion in the sector, especially as it relates to the growth of private members clubs which are largely unregulated. I am advised that Cabinet as far back as 1996 when Members opposite were in the Government made various policy decisions with the intention to prompt change in the regulation of the sector. However, none of these decisions made by that former administration in the 1990s bore any meaningful fruit. So it is this Government that decided they would take the exact same Bill laid by the previous Government, word for word, and bring it back into this Parliament and go through the process of consultation, fine-tuning, refinement and so on. These copious consultations, four years of consultations, have enhanced the quality of the Bill that is being laid today.

I am told that Trinidad and Tobago probably is the only country in the world that has an unregulated gambling sector of this size according to the International Monetary Fund. We are the only country in the world that has an unregulated gambling sector of this size. The importance of the legislation is evident from its objects which are in clause 5, which include: protecting minors and other
vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling; ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair, open and responsible manner; preventing gambling from being a source of crime, being associated with crime or being used to support crime; ensuring compliance with written laws for anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing; ensuring consumer protection; providing for the proper collection of taxes and contributing to the economy by creating employment.

As I indicated, this Bill was first introduced on July 01 2016, and it is a carbon copy of a Bill submitted by the other administration in 2015. Given the voluminous provisions within the Bill, I do not propose to treat with each clause. Instead I will discuss the important aspects of the Bill, and highlight the amendments recommended by the committee. The term “betting” was expanded to include events other than animal racing or sporting events. It would now include scenarios such as betting on economic indices such as oil price for example. The Bill seeks to provide the gambling commission with the authority to review any matter connected with gambling licences where key persons have been convicted of a criminal offence. The commission also has power to revoke licences in similar circumstances. The definition of “key person” was therefore introduced so that the reach of the commission is clear. The commission will have powers to verify the background, character and reputation of an applicant for a gambling licence, and any of their associates, employees or relatives. The term “relative” was amended to widen the class of persons in respect of whom the commission may conduct investigations.

Clauses 6 to 30 which are in Part II of the Bill are administrative. They set out the objective of the commission, its establishment, constitution, powers and duties. It
will be a body corporate appointed, managed by a board, appointed by the President on the advice of the Minister. Persons will be considered for appointment to the board based on their experience in the gambling industry and other fields like law, finance, social work, law enforcement.

Clause 6 provides for a category of persons who shall not be eligible for employment to the board, such as persons who operate gambling establishments, persons who have a financial interest in gambling establishments.

Clause 13 of the Bill imposes a duty on members of the board to submit an annual declaration that they have no actual or contingent pecuniary interest in any licensee or proposed licensee, or any business, carrying on business with the commission. It will not be acceptable for a board member to simply disclose that he has an interest. They just cannot serve.

Clause 14 gives the commission the responsibility of regulating and controlling the operation of gambling in Trinidad and Tobago. Under 14(2), the commission has an expansive list of duties, including making recommendations to the Minister relating to the industry, equipment, or devices associated with gambling, gambling establishments, licensing activities, collection of fees and levies, and resolution of disputes.

Clause 17 mandates the commission to give effect to the policy directions of the Minister as it relates to the regulation of gambling.

Clause 19 sets out the funds of the commission.

Clause 20 indicates what expenditure would be allowed by the commission.

Clause 21 gives the commission the power to maintain a bank account. It is important to note that given that the State may appropriate sums to the commission. In other words we may give the commission a subvention as set out
in clause 19(a) of the Bill. Clause 22(4) provides for surplus funds that the commission may have to be remitted to the Consolidated Fund at the end of the year.

Clause 22 requires the commission to furnish the Minister of Finance with a budget and other important information as required. The accounts of the commission will be public accounts of Trinidad and Tobago in accordance with the Constitution. The Exchequer and Audit Act will apply to audits of the annual accounts.

Under clause 24, the commission must transmit to the Minister of Finance a report that addresses the activities of the commission during the preceding year. These will be laid in Parliament together with the statements of accounts and the Auditor General’s Report. The cumulative effect of all of this is that the commission will be called to account and Parliament will have the opportunity to ensure the commission is staying within the boundaries of the law.

Clause 27 will allow for borrowing by the commission with the approval of the Minister.

Clause 30 prohibits any person from participating in an aspect of the gaming and betting sectors unless they have first acquired the necessary licence from the commission.

Clause 31 gives the commission the power to issue licences, and prescribes the various categories. When one looks at the share of volume of the various licences that must be obtained in order to participate in the sector, together with the application of fit and proper criteria in issuing licences, it is clear that if and when this legislation is passed that the gaming and betting industry will now be regulated properly for the first time. [Desk thumping] Through these mechanisms the commission will have a significant amount of control at an early stage and will be
able to cast a very wide net in respect of the persons over whom it will have oversight.

Clause 32 speaks to the persons who may apply for licence and prescribes the procedure. Clause 32(4) stipulates that notice of any application must be published in the newspapers to allow for public comment and to allow for objections by specified persons. The rationale is that while the industry is one which has the potential of positively contributing to the nation's economy, there may be legitimate concerns about allowing casinos and other gambling establishments into certain residential areas.

Clause 33 allows the commission to conduct investigation of an applicant for a licence, and their associates.

Clause 36 stipulates the form of licence.

Clause 37 itemizes the conditions of the licence.

Clause 44 of the Bill details the machinery for the commission to be able to continually review licences. This review is necessary where there is reason to suspect activities may be carried out in a gambling establishment in breach of a licence.

As a necessary part of this machinery, provisions are being included to ensure that the requirements of natural justice are met, that is, before a review is undertaken by the commission it is obligated to: notify the licensee and inform him the procedure of the review; give the licensee and other parties the opportunity to be heard in the review process; and they must also notify the licensee of their decisions, actions, to be taken and reasons for their decision.

Clauses 45 and 46 speak to suspension following a review, and revocation.

Clause 47 seeks to place an obligation on licensees to notify the commission
of any change in their circumstances. This is very important.

The appeals process is addressed by clause 50 of the Bill.

Parts IV and V of the Bill, from clauses 53 to 62, deal with gaming shops, betting shops, premises where gaming and betting activities are carried out, and how to navigate the transitional phase when the Act comes into operation. Clause 53 provides that all persons who own and operate gaming machines or betting shops, subject to the provisions of the Liquor Licences Act and the Registration of Clubs Act, must notify the commission of their existence and provide certain particulars. If they do not they shall be reported to the police, and they are required to reapply for a licence.

The reasons for notifying the commission is to allow the commission to establish an accurate record of establishments which are in operation for effective regulation of the industry. The commission is also authorised to designate the machines utilised and to approve the games to be played within gaming establishments.

Clause 58 provides that copies of the rules of all gambling game shall be available to patrons on the premises, and also, the minimum and maximum wagers for each game must be posted in a prominent location. This is to foster public confidence.

Part VI of Bill, clauses 66 to 69, deal primarily with the payment of taxes by entities carrying on gaming and betting. The taxes now proposed are in keeping with those currently being paid under the Registration of Clubs Act, last updated in 2017 and 2018.

Madam Speaker, there is an understandable perception that gambling may result in a number of social problems. With this in mind the Bill seeks to establish the Rehabilitation Fund, and Development Fund, both of which are intended to ensure that the economic output of gambling would be directed in a purposeful and
socially beneficial manner. The Rehabilitation Fund will financially assist NGOs and other groups with treating persons affected by gambling addiction and other problems. The Development Fund will be used to assist in areas such as sport, health, social and community work, arts and culture. The commission must deposit 2½ per cent and 5 per cent to the Rehabilitation Fund and Development Fund respectively of their revenue. Clause 55 establishes these funds, the Rehabilitation and Development Funds.

I now go to enforcement. Madam Speaker, it is appreciated that meaningful change can only be achieved if there is effective enforcement of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. In this regard, the Bill addresses enforcement under Part VII, and deals with the powers of authorized officers who will be a person appointed by the commission, a member of the police service, a constable appointed under the Supplemental Police Service Act, and a member of the municipal police service, and any other person duly authorised by the commission. This allows the commission to carry out enforcement activities in a robust and efficient manner. These officers will be given powers in respect of licence to premises including the power of inspection of premises, the power to examine all machines and equipment utilised in operations, and the power to request copies of any and all documents, records and the collection of funds, et cetera, and also to look at the complaints emanating from customers and clients. They can also conduct detailed and complex criminal regulatory/administrative and background investigation as well as gather intelligence in relation to organized crime and other activities related to gambling.

The need for enforcement is not simply limited to the police, and as such authorised officers may require assistance of other bodies including the Financial
Intelligence Unit, Financial Investigations Bureau, the Board of Inland Revenue, Customs Division, and so on. There would be an integrated approach. We believe these powers will be successful in effectively supervising casinos to prevent fraud, money laundering, loan sharking, other criminal activities, and unscrupulous operations where revenue may be underreported.

Offenses and penalties, Part VIII of the Bill, clauses 70 to 83, deals primarily with the gambling and betting offences, offences involving minors, general offences under related penalties. Part VIII is divided into three divisions: gaming and betting offences, minors, general offences. Some of the offences will be: using premises for licenced activity without a licence; carrying out licenced activity without a licence; manufacturing, supplying, installing or adapting gambling software; cheating. This has been amended so it no longer only deals with cheating by various people, but also any person who cheats will be guilty of an offence, thereby fostering public confidence in the gambling sector. And another offence, engaging in activities that invite or enable persons in a prohibited territory to participate in remote gambling. Madam Speaker, the offences and penalties, and this would include matters such as bringing a firearm on licenced premises without permission, or without an owner’s licence, and also a new offence where persons will wilfully interfere with an investigation by influencing, threatening, harming or impeding a potential witness, furnishing false information otherwise impeding an investigation.

We believe that these offences and penalties in Part VIII will ensure that casino gambling is fair, honest and free from criminal influence and exploitation. There are also provisions for administrative penalties if criminal thresholds have not been reached, and the commission will be empowered to pursue sanctions in the form of.
administrative fines, and this is not a unique situation. Madam Speaker, I want to reinforce, that where the commission seeks to enforce its powers the commission is required to, again, adhere to the principles of natural justice by notifying the person of the penalty to be imposed, the reasons thereof of making this decision, and they must do so within one week. This will preserve the rights of business owners.

The last part of the Bill, or the penultimate part of the Bill, clauses 89 to 90, deals with the Minister’s power to make regulations, and Part XI, Schedules one to six, address the staff of the commission, fit and proper criteria, internal controls, accounting systems, data requirements, taxes payable, and other consequential amendments.

How much more time do I have, Madam Speaker?

**Madam Speaker:** You have until 56.45.

**2.40 p.m.**

**Hon. C. Imbert:** All right, so I have 16 minutes. Okay, very good.

Now, Madam Speaker, I just want to make a point. We, in this Parliament, have gone beyond the normal requirements in interrogating this Bill. We have consulted ad infinitum. We have answered every single question. But throughout the three to four years, Madam Speaker, the proceedings of this Joint Select Committee have been dragged out and delayed. We have bent over backwards to facilitate questions coming from the Opposition, questions coming from the industry, questions coming from stakeholders. We have brought in experts because none of us, at least as far as I know, no Members of this House and the other place are experts in gambling, I am not aware of that, so we brought in world renowned international experts to advise us, not just on the law, but on the efficacy of the provisions that were being proposed and also to recommend enhancements
and improvements to the Bill.

I want to stress that the familiar complaint was laid to us that—where are the regulations? And we produced draft regulations three years ago in March 2017 and these regulations have been interrogated ad infinitum, not just by stakeholders, not just by members of the Committee, but by our international experts in videoconferencing with the Committee. I do not think there is any joint select committee that has done this amount of work on a piece of legislation other than the Insurance Committee that I have been associated with. There may be others but—[Interruption] Procurement, yes. There may be others but this is one of the most comprehensive, detailed examinations of a piece of legislation that is overdue for more than 20 years, [Crosstalk] overdue for more than 20 years.

I just want to make it clear that in the Committee, we have gone to extraordinary lengths to allow participation of all members of the industry, everybody concerned, participation of all members. I want to make it absolutely clear. [Crosstalk] I intend to re-emphasize that not only have we dealt with the Bill, we have dealt with the regulations. I, therefore, Madam Speaker, I cannot contemplate, [Crosstalk] I cannot contemplate a situation, after this Parliament has gone through this for four years and that this Bill is the exact same Bill laid by Members opposite. [Crosstalk] The Bill that was laid in 2016 was identical and we benefited from the observations and input of hon. Members of the Opposition. Many of the amendments to the Bill were made based on requests coming from the Members of the Opposition and therefore, I can see no reason whatsoever, Madam Speaker, unless there is some motive from Members opposite not supporting this long overdue reform of the gambling sector, and if I expect, we will get unanimous support of Members opposite. I beg to move. [Desk thumping]
Hon. C. Imbert (cont’d)

Question proposed.

Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (Couva South): Thank you, Madam Speaker, as I join this debate on the Motion to adopt the Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill of 2016. Madam Speaker, after having listened to the Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Minister of Finance, I thought I was in “ah fish market” [Desk thumping and laughter] based on his attempt to bully—the tactics, the strategy that he attempted to foist upon us here this evening as it relates to this particular Motion which is before the House.

And, Madam Speaker, the Minister attempted to create a narrative and paint a picture that Members of the Opposition on the Joint Select Committee dragged out or dragged on the deliberations of the Committee. The Minister, by his own admission, indicated that no one on the Committee was an expert in gambling, [Desk thumping] had hands-on experience in gambling and that is why the Committee had to seek international advice, and that is why there were 15 firms or 15 experts that applied to be part and parcel of the engagement process. The Committee had to vet properly the applications that came before the Committee and in addition to that, to ensure that there was no conflict of interest and so on before the Committee. So to say that Members of the Opposition dragged on the work of the Committee is disingenuous on the part of the Minister of Finance. [Desk thumping] And I will deal with the issue of regulations and whether the draft regulations were updated and so on and whether there was meaningful consultation with the stakeholders as it relates to this particular issue. [Desk thumping] Meaningful consultation, Madam Speaker, as it relates to the report of Governance Associates.

But more important, Madam Speaker, I want to place this industry or the
importance of this industry in a socio-economic context too. It has been established that this industry employs approximately 20,000 persons, 75 per cent of those employed are women and single mothers, and the average dependents of these 20,000 households are approximately five persons. I simply want to read from Ms. Ayanna Francis to further amplify the socio-economic importance of the industry, of Mentor Alley, Laventille, who was a reception supervisor at MaPau Club.

“Her job is to greet clients as they enter the club. The starting salary, she said, compelled her to join the gambling industry”

—and I quote—

“‘I’m from Laventille, what people call a high risk area. I’m a single parent, my daughter’s dad was shot and killed four years ago. With my job I have been able to take care of my daughter and help my mom. I have been afforded a lot of concession at my job to help my family live a much more comfortable life and have a better standard of living.’”

She indicated further that:

“…many single parents like herself and people who have just left school have been able to get…jobs”—within—“the industry”

—and so on.

And immediately, I want to go into the Bill that—it forms part and parcel of this report, and the Motion that is before the House. Because, Madam Speaker, I have established the socio-economic importance of the industry, I have also pointed in a direction of the employment and the importance of employment to persons in Trinidad and Tobago and more importantly, single mothers. I want to focus on the Bill itself and make observations on behalf of the Opposition as it relates to
vagueness and uncertainty and the need for further clarity and clarification.

Madam Speaker, as it relates to my observations and that of the Opposition, I want to point this House into Part I of the Bill as it relates to the preliminary part and immediately go to Part I, clause 4, of this Bill as it relates to what is an associate. The Bill states an:

“‘associate’, in relation to a licensed business, means any person who holds any financial interest...or can exercise any power, control or influence over, the licensed business.”

And, Madam Speaker, it is important to note that what is the standard—given the wide latitude of what an “associate” is defined as, this is especially open to abuse taking into context that the provision does not go on to describe what “influence”, “power” or “control” means. And in addition, in administrative and criminal law, there is an overarching principle; an overarching principle that a person must be certain of the parameters of what we would call “permissible conduct” and a situation where those critical terms remain uncertain, unclear and undefined, the power lies for interpretation with the Commission. And, Madam Speaker, in cases of a perverse interpretation, the aggrieved party then has to go to the court to vindicate themselves and in going to the court, this entails delay, time, expense and inconvenience.

And in addition to this, Madam Speaker, as it relates to the vagueness or the need for further clarity and so on, I will move on to the interpretation and in the Bill, it speaks to an authorized officer. An:

“‘authorised officer’ means—

(a) a person appointed by the Commission to carry out the functions of an inspector pursuant to section 70;
(b) a member of the Police Service; or
(c) a constable appointed under the Supplemental Police Service Act; or
(d) a member of the Municipal Police Service appointed under the Municipal Corporations Act; or
(e) any other person duly authorized by the Commission;”

And, Madam Speaker, the issue of an authorized officer, the Commission will have the power to act on its behalf and carry out the functions that are required, Madam Speaker.

And the question arises whether or not, Madam Speaker, that police officers who will be required to carry out the role and functions or the responsibilities of the Commission, who will they be accountable to? Will they be accountable to the Commission? Will they be accountable to the Commissioner of Police and so on? And the duality in the reporting requirements of these officers will create inevitable confusion and, as I said, conflict of interest and this is why there is the need for further clarification and amplification.

And I ask the question: Will there be a special unit within the Police Service of Trinidad and Tobago that will be created specifically? Because the Minister has admitted this is a very complex, a very intricate industry. There needs to be specialized training and so on to carry out the role and functions of the Commission and I do not know who within the police service has the expertise at the moment in relation to carrying out enforcement, [Desk thumping] and that is why I asked whether there will be the need for a special unit and how we will go about training the police officers.

And this leads me to the very issue, too, of a member of a municipal police appointed under the Municipal Corporations Act. Madam Speaker, we have heard
in this very said House, budget after budget presentation from the Minister of Finance, that there will be the appointment of 100 municipal police officers in the 14 respective regional corporations throughout Trinidad and Tobago. And I have done a bit of research and currently, at the Chaguanas Borough Corporation, there are 31 municipal police officers. At the Princes Town Regional Corporation, there are 30 municipal police officers. At the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, there are 22 municipal police officers.

Again, we must take note of the fact that they had promised in the last five years to fill 100 municipal police officers. How much of this existing establishment or complement, at the moment from these respective regional corporations, will be utilized to carry out the role and function of the Commission? And in addition to that, the question begs itself: Where will the training, where will the expertise in terms of officers within the local constabulary units come from within the framework of what is being articulated here this afternoon by the Minister of Finance on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago? So, again, they have taken five years on this particular piece of legislation. They have failed to create or to fill the 100 vacancies within the local constabulary units and so on, so I do not expect this to become a reality given the lazy approach, the lackadaisical approach, the incompetent approach [Desk thumping] of this Government over the last four and a half years.

Madam Speaker, I will move on to deal with the very issue of what the report and what the Bill seeks to focus on, which is the establishment of a gaming or what we would call Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Commission. And, Madam Speaker, in the Part II of the Bill, clause 6(2), it states very clearly that:

The Commission shall be managed by a Board appointed by the President on the
advice of the Minister, for the purpose of exercising such powers and duties as are conferred upon it by this Act, regulations made hereunder and any other written law.

Madam Speaker, given the constitutional framework of Trinidad and Tobago, the President has absolutely no discretion in the appointment based on the fact that the sole power really lies in the hands of the Minister of Finance and the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. So the appointment process really lacks what we would call independence and it is a purely political process subject to a Minister, as I said, via the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago.

    Madam Speaker, we, in the Opposition, we would have preferred, Madam Speaker, the President appointing the commissioners of this control commission after consultation and consultation between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. And just as clause 6(3) where it states that:

        The Board shall consist of a Chairman and not less than five nor more than nine other members, one of whom shall be appointed on the recommendation of the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly in accordance subsection (5).

We would have loved to see also a person represented by a body representative of the gaming industry of Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, and we are making these observations based on in recent times what we have seen unravelling itself within the operations of National Lotteries Control Board because at the end of the day, a Minister carrying out total control under the current framework, it can lead to what we would call manipulation of the political process [Desk thumping] and certainly does not lend itself to an independent process, what we are supposed to seek to achieve, Madam Speaker.
Madam Speaker, I will also go on to focus on the term “operated” because subclause (6), if you read it, subclause (6) states:

“A person…”

And this is a new subclause because the Minister went on to make a song, dance and fury about this being the identical Bill which was laid by the Partnership Government in 2015, and I will come to the issue of penalties and offences and so on when I reach that juncture to show that it is not the identical Bill or [Desk thumping] what he would term “comma” and “full stop” and the “gallerying” that he attempted to engage in here this evening. Madam Speaker, “De public make dem out long time yuh know, Fyzabad, so dey could dance, dey could open what, dey could do what”, their time is limited [Desk thumping] in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and, Madam Speaker, I am sure they will crash out of the Government whenever the Member for Diego Martin North/East calls the date for the general election. [Interruption] Diego Martin West, sorry. [Crosstalk] Well, we know you are the chairman of the party, we know you are the chairman of the party, Madam Speaker. [Crosstalk] I know the Member for Diego Martin North/East, he is smiling at what I am saying, whether who is the de facto Prime Minister or not, I will not go there.

Madam Speaker, but more importantly, (6)(a) states that:

“A person who –

(a) has operated a gambling establishment prior to coming into force of this Act;

(b) holds a licence…under this Act;

(c) intends to apply for a licence pursuant to the provisions of this Act; or

(d) has a financial interest in but does not operate a gambling
establishment,
shall not be eligible for appointment to the Board and, in the case of persons who hold positions on the Board, an application for a licence under this Act, shall be grounds for an automatic termination of the member’s appointment on the Board.”

Madam Speaker, the term “operated” is not defined in this Act and as a result, it is unclear and uncertain and the question begs itself or the question follows: Whether it applies to persons who are owners or does that apply to managers and other key personnel? Any interpretation of this word must take into consideration of the fact that by virtue of the different provisions of this Bill and to satisfy the fit and proper criteria, subclause (6) purports to exclude, as I said, a class of persons from being eligible for appointment to the Commission. Madam Speaker, it seeks to deter any person who has operated a gambling establishment prior to the commencement of the Act.

Madam Speaker, I will go on to the “Powers and duties of the Commission” and under clause 14(2), and it reads very clearly:

Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the Commission shall -

(a) grant licences pursuant to the provisions of this Act and regulations made hereunder;

(b) impose conditions in the granting of licences subject to the provisions of this Act and regulations made hereunder;”

And, Madam Speaker, this is where the Minister of Finance attempted to place the onerous—or the responsibility on the Opposition as if we did not understand our role and function in the Joint Select Committee. And the importance of regulations was underscored by one Senator, the Member for San Fernando West, when, in
2015, on the 9th of June, 2015, he spoke in another place, and I want to quote from the *Hansard* of June 2015 and probably refresh the memory of the Attorney General, and he indicated in his contribution, at that point in time, of the need for serious consultation and also for the importance of the regulations when he spoke in the other place. And he indicated that:

“This serious Government that has been involved in serious consultation, that treats workers’ rights seriously, says to the people of Trinidad and Tobago—...other than by way Sen. Hadeed’s generous crosstalk; other than by way of his grumblings and mutterings on the floor way; other than by way of that—this serious Government says to the people of Trinidad and Tobago: ‘Take us seriously because we have had no consultation with the...’”—stakeholders.

And he went on to indicate about the Bill needing a three-fifths majority and as I said, the importance of regulations. And I quote, Attorney General:

“Has the hon. Minister, in considering the architecture...”

You know the Attorney General likes to use two terminologies in this House, “architecture” and “proportionality”, in his contributions. He said:

“Has the hon. Minister, in considering the architecture of this Bill and in prescribing regulations, factored that this Bill does not allow for an offence to be attributed to regulations?

‘The Minister may make Regulations prescribing anything necessary or convenient for carrying out or giving effect to this Act.’”

And more importantly, in relation to the operationalizing of this Bill, the regulations are of critical and paramount importance and when the Minister spoke during his contribution, he says that the regulations are being out there and so on
and we have had sight of the regulations, but it is important to note that there is a report to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago Joint Select Committee on Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill, 2016 on the regulations to be made under this Bill and this report has been prepared by the firm, Governance Associates Limited which was engaged by—on behalf of the Joint Select Committee through the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

3.10 p.m.

And today we want to applaud the work and the advice of the firm Governance Associates Limited as it relates to what they did for the benefit of the Joint Select Committee, and by extension the gambling industry, and by extension Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker. So it is important that the Opposition places on record its deepest sense of appreciation to the good work done by Governance Associates Limited, Madam Speaker.

And I want to quote very clearly that it is important that they said, and I quote:

Having considered the drafts, we offer the overarching commitments...

Madam Speaker.

They provide a workable foundation for the new regulatory scheme. We would recommend that the settled—

I want to reiterate, not the draft.

We would recommend that the settled regulation be the subject of consultation with the industry to ensure that there are no unexpected issues.

[Desk thumping] And I ask today, I challenge the Minister of Finance to tell this House and tell the stakeholders whether there has been meaningful consultation and feedback—[Desk thumping]—from the stakeholders on the settled, I want to reiterate, on the settled regulation.
And if the Minister was a very protective— I could remember when I was the Minister in the Ministry of Finance to Minister Howai, the current Minister of Finance used to come to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and refer to my then senior Minister as “Lazy Larry” and he attempted to paint the then Minister of Finance as not knowing what he was doing at that time. I could remember last week, when he was contributing he referred to quack doctors and engineers, and so on, in Trinidad and Tobago. I do not know if he could point towards a direction of a stadium in Grenada and a wall somewhere in Maraval, Madam Speaker. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, we must ask the question: Why, after into their final months of the outgoing Government of Trinidad and Tobago, there is no settled regulations so that there can be feedback? He boasted about—he called out a list of stakeholders when he spoke about consultation and getting feedback, and so on. I want to ask him today, Madam Speaker: Has there been any feedback from, for example, the Trinidad and Tobago Members Club Association, as it relates to the settled regulations; whether there has been any feedback from the Union of Members Clubs and Lottery Workers, Madam Speaker; whether there has been any feedback from MaPau Club? And I could go on and on, as it relates to—and whether there has been any feedback from the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Board of Inland Revenue, the Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago, the Commissioner of Police, Customs and Excise, the Betting Levy Board, and so on, all the very important institutions in Trinidad and Tobago as it relates to the operationalization of the Bill. [Desk thumping] Madam Speaker, and that is why I have to underscore the point here, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South, your initial speaking time is now
spent. You are entitled to 15 more minutes to wind up your contribution. Please proceed.

**Mr. R. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. And that is why I have to debunk this misleading narrative which was created by the Minister of Finance that there has been meaningful consultation with the stakeholders of Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, that was a term of the past, because that was a term that he used 32 times in his first budget presentation, and that has gone through the window, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I want to go on to the very important issue too, as it relates to the commission and the importance of—again, we are very concerned about a politically-appointed board appointing a chief executive officer, appointing a person who we believe will be subject to doing the bidding of the political directorate in this heavily-charged political environment, Madam Speaker. And in that regard, we are very concerned as an Opposition as it relates to under this part of the Bill, Madam Speaker, the draft Bill. We are concerned about clause 17, where it speaks of:

“The Commission shall give effect to such written policy directions of the Minister, in relation to any matter”—concerning—“the regulation of gambling as”—it—“appears to”—the Minister—“to be”—in the—“public interest.”

Madam Speaker.

This gives the Minister wide and what you would call autonomous powers, and the issue of political interference can certainly arise, Madam Speaker, given the track record of this Government and how many cases have gone to the courts of Trinidad and Tobago. And it is clear, based on the interpretation of the courts of Trinidad
and Tobago, that the Government continues to infringe on the free and what we would call fair democratic process of the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this leads me to the very important issue of the licensing regime, Madam Speaker. And when you look at Part III, the licensing regime of this particular Bill, and it focuses on Part III, clause 31, Madam Speaker.

“The Commission shall issue licenses in accordance with the provisions of this Act”.

And it spells out a Gaming Operators Licence; a Gaming Owners Licence; a Bookmakers Licence and Promoters Licence; a Gaming Machine Operating Licence; a Gaming Machine Distributor Licence; a Technical Operators Licence; a Premises Licence; a Personal Licence; a Gaming Machine Manufacture Licence; and

“(j) any other license as the Commission may stipulate from time to time as it deems necessary.”

And related to the discharge of its duties and functions.

Madam Speaker, this is a Government that continues to boast about they are championing the ease of doing business in Trinidad and Tobago. Given this regimented—what we could call licensing regime that will be required to operate in the gaming and betting sector, and not only the gaming and betting sector, Madam Speaker, this will focus on, in the 41 constituencies of this country, there are many watering holes in this country. In those watering holes there are slot machines, amusement roulette machines, and so on, whether it is from Charlotteville, to Parlatuvier, to Basta Hall, Buccaneer down in Point, Carenage, and so on, Madam Speaker.
Given the rigid fit and proper criteria, it can lead to massive job losses. Because, out of the frustration, out of the regimented criteria, and so on, Madam Speaker, bar owners may decide that they will be not be part and parcel of this, there is too much of bureaucracy, there is too much of additional cost, the profit margins, and so on, and it may lead them in the direction of closing down. It may lead to the death knell of a number of these watering holes, and so on, in the Trinidad and Tobago. And under this Government, 63,633 people have lost their jobs in the formal and informal sector, and going in this direction could lead to further unemployment, further job losses in Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker. And as I said—so from where they seem to have what we would call a conflict, in terms of their policy thinking and execution, they boast about, as I said, creating that enabling environment in the ease of doing business.

In recent times, I think we have dropped on the global index. And based on the overall operations of this Government, it is a line-up Government, because you have to line up for gas. You have to line up for birth certificates, you have to line up for passports. You name it, Madam Speaker. [Desk thumping] In fact, we have now gone on record in the Caribbean. We have the longest waiting list to get a passport now, “yuh know”. I think it is about three or between three to five months to get your passport and that is the track record of a Government that says it cares about the people and it is creating the enabling environment to do business in Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, we on this side are very concerned about the chaos, the confusion that this Government continues to create in the lives of the ordinary citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I want to come to the very important point about Part VIII of the
Bill, which focuses on offences and penalties, and so on. And Madam Speaker, there is where the Minister of Finance is clearly caught—as we would say, using the cricketing analogy—in the slips. Because, Madam Speaker, he said that this was the exact Bill, Madam Speaker, and even went to underscore that it was the exact Bill because he did not change, what? He did not change a full stop. He did not change a comma, and so on. But Madam Speaker, how come there is increased penalties? How come there is increased penalties, Madam Speaker? And you know, the increased penalties and, a pet subject of the Member for San Fernando West, the Attorney General, disproportionate and whether the offences and penalties are going in proportionality. I see my colleague, the Member for Oropouche West is smiling broadly, as it relates to that.

Because again, when the Attorney General was in another place—and I want to quote from the Hansard of the 09/06/2015, Madam Speaker—he spoke of excessive criminalization, Madam Speaker, and the work.

“Is it fitting that the offences prescribed in this legislation include offences on the summary conviction of up to $5million? Madam President, is it fitting that an argument against excessive criminalization can be levied against this Bill? And is it not true that the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy knows the effect of excessive criminalization.

The hon. Minister certainly participated in some excellent work which we as a Senate were privileged to do in the Joint Select Committee.”

And he went on to speak about the penalties, and so on, Madam Speaker.

[Crosstalk] Yes, I know what I am reading from, Madam Speaker.

Attorney General. You must not be hypocritical [Desk thumping] Mr. Attorney General, and you must tell this House what has changed your position today based
on what I will continue to read on the issue of excessive criminalization and
whether you are in agreement, Attorney General, with the increased penalties
which are in the draft Bill, Madam Speaker. And did you give your colleague, the
Minister of Finance, the advice, the legal advice, as it relates to your role in the
Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker?
And as I said, for example, increased penalty, and this is as it relates to clause 70.
Increased penalty subclause (2) states that the penalty for the contravention of
subclause (1), is $250,000, and now, to imprisonment to 20 years, as opposed to
one year. It was one year in the original Bill. It is 20 years now. Our Bill, it was
one year. And that is the deception of the Minister of Finance. And that is why
you cannot trust the PNM. That is why the citizens cannot believe them, because
they speak with forked tongues consistently, Madam Speaker. [Desk thumping]
And also, as it relates to clause 21, Madam Speaker, the increased penalty
subclause (2), offenders will now be liable on summary conviction to a fine of
$250,000, and again the penalty in terms of imprisonment to 20 years. We had
proposed six months in our original Bill, and it has moved from six months to 20
years. And the Senator, Faris Al-Rawi, had the gall to speak about excessive
criminalization in 2015. [Desk thumping]
So, Madam Speaker the writing is on the wall. The writing is on the wall, that this
is a mamaguay Government. This is a deceptive Government. You cannot trust
them—[Desk thumping]—with anything that they bring in the Parliament of
Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker.
And Madam Speaker, I am sure the public of Trinidad and Tobago, the voting
public, will not gamble with them for another five years—[Desk thumping]—will
not gamble with them for another five years, Madam Speaker.
Madam Speaker, if we are to really examine the modus operandi of the PNM for the last five years, they have been a Government—well they have given away the country already, Chaguanas East. There is no hope. This report and this Bill is a typical PNM Bill, “taxing yuh”—[Desk thumping]—“threatening tuh jail yuh”, Madam Speaker, and taking your property and assets away, Madam Speaker. That has been the focus of this Government—[Desk thumping]—for the last five years, because they cannot deliver, they have been incompetent, they continue to blame Kamla and the Opposition for their failings, for their missteps, for their lack of delivery, and that is why I am saying that we on this side, we reject this Joint Select Committee Report. We will not be part and parcel of the mamaguy and deception of the People's National Movement led by Dr. Keith Rowley. Madam Speaker, I thank you. [Desk thumping]

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to enter this debate. It also gives me extreme pleasure to answer my good friend, my colleague, the Member for Couva South. Because, Madam Speaker, there is an old saying about sound coming best from certain types of vessels. And what I can say, Madam Speaker, without a shred of doubt, is that I intend to decimate the argument, put forward by the Member for Couva South. Madam Speaker, all of that tirade and noise and drama effectively results in the hon. Member talking to barely a few points. The hon. Member effectively made a song and a dance about regulations. The hon. Member made a song and dance about Ministerial overreach, meaning that the Minister could somehow control the authorized officers. The hon. Minister of Finance was met with another concern, job losses, coming from the Member for Couva South. And the last one was the
increased penalties. Four points is effectively what they made.

Now, Madam Speaker, what I find astounding about the hon. Members is that the entire argument made by Couva South seems to come from a contribution which I gave in June 2015. And Madam Speaker, let me, for the record start to correct what we heard come from the mouth of the hon. Member opposite. The Minister of Finance said in English, Madam Speaker, which is the language of this country officially in this Parliament, that the Bill that was laid in this Parliament by this Government was, word for word, the Bill that came to the Parliament in May 2015 by the last Government.

The Member then went on to report upon the Joint Select Committee's work. And in that Joint Select Committee work, Madam Speaker, in highlighted text, in submissions coming for amendments, right here paid for by the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago and given to Members opposite, are all of the amendments to that Bill. So, Madam Speaker, it is childish and nonsensical for the hon. Member to pretend that the Minister of Finance said that the Motion to adopt the amendments from the Joint Select Committee is the same thing as the Bill that was laid in 2015, now 2016, Madam Speaker. It is puerile.

But, Madam Speaker, worse than that, the hon. Member said that he took pleasure as a Government Minister in the Ministry of Finance. This is not a newcomer Member to the Parliament Madam Speaker. For the Member to not know that we are debating a Motion to adopt amendments from a Joint Select Committee that took four years to get done, Madam Speaker, it is— Madam Speaker, I want back the money for the people of Trinidad and Tobago paid to that hon. Member to keep him in the Parliament to make a submission like that, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the taxpayers of this country, we demand a refund, Madam Speaker. [Crosstalk]
Madam Speaker, I sat quietly during the contribution of the hon. Member, you know. So Madam Speaker, let us get to this. Let me put this into context for the listening, sensible public, through you. Madam Speaker, we are here debating a Motion to adopt the work of a Joint Select Committee. That Motion is premised upon a report coming from a Joint Select Committee. That report, Madam Speaker, is under the hands of the Chairman, the Minister of Finance. That report was laid last year, Madam Speaker. In that entire report, we have evidence of the adoption of the Joint Select Committee's work in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019; four joint select committee years where we adopt the work and we bring it forward.

In those four years of work, the Members of the Opposition participated in the Joint Select Committee. A report was sent to the hon. Members to sign in November last year. We are now in February of 2020; November, December, January, February. The Members said they needed Siparia's consent to sign the report and that they required a mere two weeks to get that consent. The Minister of Finance then said: “Well, okay, you want two weeks, take a month.” Four months later we come to this Parliament today. The Joint Select Committee is laid. Madam Speaker, you know what is not in the Joint Select Committee Report? There is no minority report. There is no minority report coming from the Members opposite. And the Member has the temerity to say that this Government is lazy, this Government is slothful. Madam Speaker, the evidence of sloth and laziness is to take a two-week request to get permission from Siparia to sign the report and four months later.

[Mr. Charles rises]

Madam Speaker, I have not heard a Standing Order, so I am not giving way.

Madam Speaker the bound report—
Mr. Charles: Standing Order 48 (4) and (7).

[Madam Speaker rises]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Blame Kamla. That will take you to the end of the year.

Madam Speaker: When your leader decides to recognize me then we would— I believe I first heard that coming from this side. I first heard that in this very debate coming from your speaker. But I remind all speakers, even if it is said outside, when you say it in here, it is your own act, you have adopted it. Okay? We call each other either by our portfolios, or the hon. Member. We are all honourable in this House. Continue, Attorney General.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Joint Select Committee's Report coming four months after a request was made for the Member for Siparia to give consent to the report; four months later we stand here in this House with no minority report, not a single shred of evidence to talk to the four points made: regulations, ministerial overreach, offences being supposedly excessive, Madam Speaker, or the impact upon the job losses. So Madam Speaker, my friends opposite want to come today and talk about hard work?

Madam Speaker, let me get on to the points made by the hon. Members in the context of the Bill. Let us start with the regulations, the first big point made by the Member opposite. Madam Speaker, I want to read from a Cabinet Note coming from the Member for Siparia's government. The first Cabinet Note, Madam Speaker, is that considered on the 6th of June, 2013, confirmed the 13th of June, 2013. And that effectively asks for establishment of a legal and regulatory framework for the gambling and gaming industry in Trinidad and Tobago. They set up a working group. And in that, the Government then went to work in 2013.
In 2015, there is a Cabinet Note and here is the Minute. The Cabinet Note was considered March 26, 2015. The decision was on April 02, 2015. And listen to what that Cabinet Minute says:

Cabinet agreed to approve the undermentioned documents regarding the legal and regulatory framework for the gaming industry.

Copies of which were attached to the Note:

1. The Gambling (Gaming and Betting Control) Bill, 2015.
2. The Gambling (Gaming and Betting Control) Application for Gaming Licences Regulations, 2015.
3. The Gambling (Gaming and Betting Control) Accounting and Internal Regulations, 2015.
5. The Gambling (Gaming and Betting Control) Gaming Devices and Equipment Regulations, 2015; and

What does that mean? The Members opposite had the copy of the regulations since 2015, Madam Speaker. Those regulations came into the Joint Select Committee’s work. In the Joint Select Committee’s work, we referred them to the expert to the Committee and this is Governance Associates and the hon. Member for Couva South comes here today to say, “Point number one: do not bring this Bill into effect because the regulations need holistic and comprehensive consultation,” and then the Member purports to rely upon the wording in the report.

3.40 p.m.

So, Madam Speaker, let me read what the hon. Member did not have the
courage to read coming from the report of Gaming Associates, it is a report to the
Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago Joint Select Committee on Gambling (Gaming
and Betting) Control Bill, 2016, on the regulations to be made under the Bill.
Madam Speaker, let me skip right to the relevant part. After the honourable
experts to the Committee reported on the regulations and they said in respect of the
regulations: number one, they provide a workable foundation; number two, the
commission should be given flexibility over the commencement of new functions;
number three, that the regulations appear to be continuous of current rules,
continuation of current rules, we support their carrying forward without
amendment.

But, Madam Speaker, here is what they say and this is material.

We suggest the new gambling commission —let me repeat that—

We suggest the new gambling commission must be permitted sufficient time
to gain that knowledge and understanding to enable it to take informed action when
it moves to introduce more contemporary regulations in any particular area.
Let me explain to you why I just stressed what I did, Madam Speaker. If the hon.
Members had the courage to at least read the Bill as proposed to be amended, the
first point that they would note is that this Act in clause 2 Parts I, II and XI and
Schedule 1, comes into operation on the date of assent, the rest of the Act by
proclamation. Madam Speaker, what is Part I? Preliminary. What is Part II,
Madam Speaker? It is the establishment of the gaming control commission. The
report from the experts to the Joint Select Committee, not the experts to the PNM,
to the Parliament Joint Select Committee, said that the Commission should have
time to consider regulations. But, Madam Speaker, what I am shocked and
ashamed to hear today is the hon. Members pretend that the Bill cannot be passed
without the regulations being done first.

Number one, the hon. Member asked me to explain my position between 2015 June and today. Madam Speaker, I can tell you, everything that the hon. Member read out in his reciting what I said in Parliament in the Senate then as it related to the need for regulations, Madam Speaker, we have amended the regulation provision to say that the regulations are to be by affirmative resolution. Number two, we say that the commission can be installed first. Number three, shamefully on the part of members opposite, Madam Speaker, we passed the public procurement law. In passing the procurement law, it was specific that the public procurement Act would be proclaimed. The commission would be installed, the public procurement regulator by the song and dance method to appoint that regulator. But, Madam Speaker, as they complained about the regulator and the last President taking a long time to do that—because the Government has no control with that—Madam Speaker, here is what section 63 of the public procurement Act says. Section 63 effectively allows the public procurement commission, the regulator, to produce the regulations.

So, Madam Speaker, as Siparia chuckles away, trying to hide the position as Couva South has left the Chamber; number one, the regulations are to be produced after the proclamation of the Act; number two, the case in precedent is the public procurement Act; number three, who piloted the public procurement Act?—the UNC. So today, we have to do regulations at the end. Today, we cannot pass the gaming law because regulations are not in effect—

Madam Speaker, can the babbling coming from Siparia cease?

**Hon. Member:** “She cyar help it. She cyar help it.”

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. So, Member for Siparia, everybody is going to have an
opportunity to join the debate if they so wish. Okay? I remind everybody of Standing Order 53, with respect to Members who are not speaking, they will listen in silence, no excessive crosstalk and very low volumes. Remember people here were talking about how loudly we sound but the Chamber carries a certain amount of reverberation. So please. Attorney General.

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** Yes, Madam Speaker, under the public procurement legislation piloted by the UNC, it is okay to have regulations after. Under this law, it is not okay. So all of sudden you must forget the methodology to produce regulations, abandon the approach taken in the public procurement route and today, with no minority report, Couva South comes to tell us, “Bill cyar pass because regulations not ready”. And I just read to you from the expert to the Joint Select Committee which said that the commission, obviously when appointed— Madam Speaker, you “cyar” appoint the commission until you pass the law. You cannot pass the law until we pass this Chamber today. So, Madam Speaker, inconsistency number one, in relation to regulations. You did not read the whole report to the Parliament, Couva South.

Inconsistency number two, the public procurement law says openly, by way of precedent, that we can take this approach. Inconsistency number three, section 63 of the public procurement Act allows that and that is in terms of comparative work.

Madam Speaker, let us get further down to the position. The second point made by the hon. Member opposite is the power of the Minister and he was talking— the hon. Member, about the appointment of the board. Madam Speaker, the board is the commission. For four years in the Joint Select Committee, the Member for Couva South, the Member of Chaguanas West, the other members of the Joint
Select Committee had nothing to say about the powers of the Minister by way of appointing. There is no minority report. The Independent Senators have signed this report in support. But today, Madam Speaker, there is a song and a dance about ministerial overreach.

And, Madam Speaker, here is where that song and dance gets interesting. The hon. Member for Couva South made a submission that because the authorized officers meaning Trinidad and Tobago police officers, municipal police officers, supplemental police officers, SRPs and authorized officers coming from the gaming industry commission, because those officers are working in tandem with the commission, we get a “school boy” debate today asking us to say, “Well, who going to supervise them? They have dual roles of appointment. Who backs them constitutionally?” Madam Speaker, again, a most infantile argument.

This was dealt with by the Privy Council in R v Hinds, Madam Speaker. In the Hinds decision, the backing of the Police Service Commission was set out by everybody being made aware that you answer to the Commissioner of Police if you are a police man. You answer to the Police Service Commission if you are there. Your reports go to the Commission from a reporting mechanism. It is the same thing for the Financial Intelligence Unit. It is the same thing for the public procurement Act.

So, Madam Speaker, today, four years later, absolute silence, no minority report, up jumps the argument that we need to look at the constitutionality of the authorized officers because the Minister appoints the board and the board appoints authorized officers. The provisions of the legislation are absolutely clear. The authorized officers in exercising their powers, Madam Speaker, cannot go into premises where there is a refusal unless they are given a warrant from a court of
And, Madam Speaker, the precedent for that is to be found in the Financial Intelligence Unit Act. It is to be found, Madam Speaker, in the public procurement legislation and Madam Speaker, permit me to put the public procurement legislation on the record. Madam Speaker, shameless Opposition “two by four” politics today, Madam Speaker, because they feel people “doh” do their homework. Madam Speaker, listen to what section 43(1) of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act says:

“All officer in the service of the Office and authorised by the Regulator in writing…may, for the purpose of conducting an investigation into any alleged or suspected breach of this Act—

(a) examine…inquire…

(b) examine…make copies…remove…”—et cetera.

Madam Speaker, what kind of serious Member comes here today, having passed as a government then, the UNC Government, the public procurement Act, where the same power and privileges exist in the public procurement Act and today, no minority report, four years of silence, probably paid for, let me repeat this, probably paid for to all of a sudden embarrass the position of intellect in this Parliament. Because, Madam Speaker, how do you justify passing it in the FIU Act, passing it in the public procurement Act. And today, the Member comes up, “Well, you might offend the separation of powers, PSC principle, constitutionality, Police Service Commission.” Today, is an extension of the Minister. Madam Speaker, what intellectual nonsense is that? [Crosstalk]

Madam Speaker, let us go further because this debate will continue in and out of this House. What is the other point that the hon. Members raised? Increased
penalties. Madam Speaker, had the Members been courageous enough to even crack the spine of the Joint Select Committee report, bother to go into the offences section, bother to understand the import of the law, they would notice the introduction of the concept of lawful excuse. Sounds simple, simple enough, Madam Speaker. Lawful excuse is the method by which you allow people to defend themselves when they are met with an allegation of a crime. It is a wide-ranging, softening of the penalty by affecting the intention to commit a crime element of an offence. And if the hon. Members opposite cannot and will not understand that, well then, the Almighty ought to help us all out of that difficulty.

So, Madam Speaker, it makes absolutely no sense for the hon. Members to say that Sen. Al-Rawi in 2015 complained about the excessive criminality when today we come with a modified version of the criminality. And let me put it on record, the Joint Select Committee for the four years that the UNC—and I could tell you this, Madam Speaker, if you look at the verbatim records, the Member for Chaguanas West agreed with almost every single clause on the record—

Mr. Imbert: Exactly.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Perhaps that is why Chaguanas West is not here today, I do not know—

Mr. Imbert: And agree with—all agreed with the penalties.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: But, Madam Speaker, the verbatim reports will demonstrate full agreement—

Mr. Imbert: Couva South too.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Couva South was in agreement nodding head. The only person stout to the opposition cause was Sen. Wade Mark, in the verbatim records, who said, “I need two weeks for Siparia to tell me to sign the report,” and four months
later, nobody could sign the report.

So, Madam Speaker, let us get to the excessive criminality, let us get to the point of: Is there precedence for this? Yes, Madam Speaker, the Insurance Act, the Financial Institutions Act. What the Member for Couva South did not read out and I asked him to but he stopped, was what I had to say to then Sen. Howai as to the good work that we did in the Insurance Act, Madam Speaker, in ensuring that the penalties, which are in the millions of dollars, are managed appropriately. Madam Speaker, may I ask what time is full time for me?

**Madam Speaker:** Your original time ends at 3.59.14 and then you would be entitled to 15 minutes extended time.

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** Much obliged. Madam Speaker, let us get to the heart of what this Bill is about because the aspect of job losses is the only thing that I need to respond to in terms of the four points—job losses.

Madam Speaker, I was in the Senate of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, sitting opposite a UNC Government. An Opposition Senator stayed home and a member employed by MaPau Casino—

**Mr. Imbert:** Imagine that—

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** —came to the Senate.

**Mr. Imbert:** Exactly.

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** “Dey fill up de gallery with de whole ah” Ma Pau’s workers [Crosstalk] and then they insisted that the 2015 law, in June 2015, had to pass. They need this, the Government have to pass this. I had the Bill for one day. The Independent Bench noticed that it was inappropriate for the Opposition and Independent Bench to have the Bill for one day, we asked for a joint select committee. And I made certain observations which we have corrected in the Bill.
today, in the amendments proposed. But, Madam Speaker, I want to know what changed so drastically for Couva South and for Siparia that in 2015 the entire position—

**Mr. Charles:** 48(5), he must refer to the next Prime Minister as the hon. Member for Siparia. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** Madam Speaker, I would like to know what is wrong with the Westminster tradition, I am perfectly in keeping with it.

So, Madam Speaker, what has changed so drastically for the Member for Couva South and the Member for Siparia that in 2015 June, they could fill the whole Parliament in Tower D with Ma Pau Casinos and today, with a materially improved Bill, four years later, international experts coming to the forum, documents in writing, Chaguanas West saying “Yes”, Tabaquite saying “Yes”, Couva South smiling in the Committee, agreeing with everything we had to say, today they rolled him out to speak the opposite, but that is okay— What happened to say now today from Couva South that he is reading a letter from Ma Pau’s workers? Madam Speaker, which is it? Support for the 2015 Bill or support for the 2019 Bill, because the 2019 Bill, Madam Speaker, only got better. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, let us get what this Bill does. I stand here before you today, speaking as one of the Government Bench, able to tell you that the economy and the issue of crime are the two most significant issues in our society as they have been for years.

Madam Speaker, I stand here today able to say that as a result of aggressive reforms in the criminal justice system, the introduction of Criminal Procedure
Rules, the creation of three divisions of court, the movement of judges from 36 judges to 64 legislatively, from 12 to 15 in the Court of Appeal, the introduction of a computerized environment, the introduction of plea bargaining, the introduction of judge-only trials, the introduction of 21 Masters, soon to be 31 Masters, from where we started at two Masters, the creation of 125 courts by the time April rolls around this year, I am able to tell you that trials can now be completed in 20 minutes in court as is now the fact in Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] Two weeks ago, Madam Speaker, Mme Justice Lisa Ramsumair-Hinds sat in a judge-only trial, a matter that was 18 years old, wounding with intent, rendered a verdict of not guilty in writing, 13 witnesses were heard in that matter—

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Madam Speaker, I rise on 48(1).

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:**—an entire matter was done in 48 minutes flat.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:**—48(1), please.

**Madam Speaker:** Proceed.

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. “People does get jumpy when dey start to hear good news”, you know, because it is the opposite of what the UNC is trying to ply in this country. So, in the context of the law, the criminal justice system stands into place. In the context of this law, what is this law asking us to do? Madam Speaker, in January 2015, bouncing glibly unprepared, Attorney General for the UNC walked into the Financial Action Task Force on site review of Trinidad and Tobago. Nobody talked to the next person, the report comes out we failed the review completely. And what did the Financial Action Task Force tell this country in its published report? It says, Madam Speaker, in relation to recommendation—

**Madam Speaker:** Attorney General, your original time is now spent.
Hon. F. Al-Rawi: If I may have the rest?

Madam Speaker: Please continue.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Much obliged. They say in relation to recommendation 22 and recommendation 28 and in relation to the immediate outcomes that are relevant that we have no supervision for private members’ clubs and as the IMF has said, Trinidad and Tobago is the only country under its observation, in the pool of reporting facilities, the only country in the world with an economy of our size to have a unsupervised regulatory environment.

Madam Speaker, in the Financial Action Task Force and in Trinidad and Tobago’s anti-corruption drive under Prime Minister Rowley, the Member for Diego Martin West, one of the largest areas for abuse, Madam Speaker, is in the private members’ club. Let me explain to you why. The Financial Action Task Force produced a written report to say that the abuse that can be had with people walking in with the proceeds of crime, cash—let me explain for the average person, through you, Madam Speaker. A bandit walks into a casino, the bandit has $100,000 or a $1 million in cash, buys chips at the table, gets to the table and then says, “You know what? I do not want to play”. Takes those chips, gives it to his accomplice who he wants to wash the money with, he walks out the casino, the accomplice walks up to the cash and takes the $1 million back. Transaction clean and clear. That is not my example, Madam Speaker, that is the example coming from the Financial Action Task Force. I can tell you as an attorney-at-law that worked for many years for the gaming sector; online gaming, overseas gaming, I can tell you as an attorney-at-law that working with Interpol on doing international coordinated matters of regulation and seizure, I can tell you that the gaming industry is a multibillion-dollar industry. It is so wealthy an industry that I can tell you, right in
Trinidad and Tobago, one private members’ club rented a particular location for approximately half a million dollars a month for a small location and stayed without occupation for approximately seven years straight. And when asked why, they say that is less than 2 per cent of our daily earnings.

So let us talk real and ask the Member for Siparia and the Opposition why they are blocking this law today. And, Madam Speaker, let me tell you this, the financial investigation branch of the TTPS—Madam Speaker, I heard the PRO for the UNC making a most ridiculous submission in relation to the Minister of National Security and the Attorney General’s office, saying, “Come with evidence of these proceeds of crime, talk about it.” Madam Speaker, does the hon. Senator know about the tipping off provisions? I know Siparia may not know about it, the hon. Member, but, Madam Speaker, the fact is that we cannot speak to these matters because we cannot be guilty of tipping off, we cannot be guilty of breaches of the law.

But, Madam Speaker, let me give you the typologies and evidence coming from the FIU because we laid the report in the Parliament today. I can tell, for instance, that cash seizures alone in a one-month period effectively, nearly two-month period, have crossed already $36.8million in cash, Madam Speaker. Cash, Madam Speaker, cash seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that of the 17 matters for money laundering before the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and that are now in court, there are many more matters behind that. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that there are only 111 private members’ clubs registered with the FIU. Madam Speaker, did you hear Couva South? I wrote down what the hon. Member had to say. He said in his plea about workers, he said there were tens of thousands, thousands of workers who would be
on the breadline, thousands of bars, he called them “watering holes”.
Madam Speaker, the Board of Inland Revenue recognizes that there are approximately anywhere between 5,000 to 10,000 amusement machines in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, I do not know which private members’ club “dey” representing here today, but I could tell you I know of the private members’ clubs that have those machines.
And, Madam Speaker, let us get to what the Board of Inland Revenue says. On the 111 entities that they supervise, they estimate $400million in revenue for Trinidad and Tobago. Let me repeat this. Ten thousand machines on the outside, 111 people registered. The Board of Inland Revenue cannot enforce the registration requirements, they cannot go in and audit, Madam Speaker, but this gaming law allows the taxpayers of this country to get their fair share from highly profitable enterprises in this country. And the only people standing in the way of that with no minority report, with no commentary on the clauses, no mention of regulations, no mention of ministerial overreach, no mention of excessive criminalization, no mention of job losses, is the UNC. And today I call a spade a spade. “Who business yuh minding?” The people of Trinidad and Tobago or a private members’ club that has contributed to campaign? [Desk thumping]

Hon. Member: “Oooooh.”

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Madam Speaker, let us talk brutal in this country. [Crosstalk] It is the money from crime that finds itself in casinos. It is the inability to monitor what comes in to audit. It is the inability to have authorized officers go in there and check the taxpayers of this country. Madam Speaker, the right to life is the most paramount right in the Constitution. Today they tell us to protect job workers. Yes, we will protect them by collecting taxes and make sure they are looked after;
yes, we have societal funds anchored in the legislation; and yes, we have a rehabilitative fund and a developmental funding.

But, Madam Speaker, the money from crime goes through the casino sector and today the Member for Siparia boasts a team—because the Member for Couva South said on behalf of the Opposition, the Opposition has a leader. The leader sits opposite. And the leader could not be bothered to tell her Members to sign a minority report in four months. The leader could not be bothered to tell the Parliament that we had any observations, the leader could not be bothered to exercise that in the two weeks that Sen. Mark asked. Four months later, the hon. Member comes to this Parliament, leading off the Member for Couva South, saying he is speaking for the Opposition. Madam Speaker, you know what laziness is? You know what dereliction of duty is, Madam Speaker? It is the UNC. [Desk thumping] That is what this is.

So, Madam Speaker, on behalf of the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; on behalf of the advocacy which the Financial Action Task Force has asked us to take seriously, which the competitive indices tell us we ought to take seriously; on behalf of the Member for Chaguanas West who must have absented himself today because he would have been too ashamed to hear the UNC in opposition, maybe that is why St. Augustine is not here either, I do not know; on behalf of all of these right thinking, sensible people in Trinidad and Tobago, we call the UNC’s bluff, I will tell you why. Nothing that they have said today is incapable of being cured at the committee stage. Nothing. The precedent for appointment of the people in the board, no big deal, we could borrow from the precedent in the civil asset fortitude regime, we could borrow from the precedent in the public procurement regime—easy stuff.
Two: job losses; no job losses, job creation. The more regulated, the more people employed. The more money collected by taxation, the more prosperity in this country—easy to deal with. Madam Speaker, when we get to ministerial overreach, we will bring up the ABCs of constitutional law for the hon. Members, we will remind them of the classic cases that the Privy Council has handed down for us and they will know by way of precedence in Trinidad and Tobago existing laws that that is a non-point.

So, Madam Speaker, everything that you come here today to say, hon. Member for Couva South, on behalf of your leader, on behalf of the Opposition, Madam Speaker, why could you not say that in four years in the Joint Select Committee? The Parliament pays for paper for every Member, the Parliament pays for computer ink for every Member, the Parliament gives you a binder, the Parliament pays for an iPad for you, the Parliament gives you printed laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Leader of the Opposition has legal staff in the Opposition, Members of Parliament have assistance. “None ah all yuh, respectfully coulda get somebody to write ah one page and submit it?” In four years and four months? Madam Speaker, dereliction of duty.

Madam Speaker, dereliction of duty, slothfulness, laziness, ulterior motive, pretense, Madam Speaker. All of those are things that pop to mind to anybody listening to the counter-argument to the Member for Couva South.

4.10 p.m.

Madam Speaker, they must know better, they must know why they would not put it in writing. You know what is the easiest thing to do, Madam Speaker? Stand up and bramble, do like somebody opposite who could only grumble and grumble and grumble, Madam Speaker, as opposed to contribute. You see, if it is
put into writing, then you commit yourself to transparency. If it is put into writing, independent entities will get to understand the rubbish you are talking, Madam Speaker. That is why there is no minority report, because “yuh had tuh have ah whole set ah lack ah shame” to put in a report with the four points made by the Member for Couva South, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Board of Inland Revenue says, in 2017, they projected to collect gaming taxes for $250 million. They actually collected $58 million. For 2018, they projected to collect $281 million, they collected $79 million. Madam Speaker, 2019, they proposed $103 million, they got $71 million. And hear what the Board of Inland Revenue says. It says they need the private members amendments. They need the law to compel this law to go into effect for the benefit of taxpayers. They say that the recommendations are to allow for them to have multi-agency approach. They say, Madam Speaker, as a result of this Government’s multi-agency creation, in the period July 2019 to September 2019, in five private members clubs alone, they were able to receive and recover $29 million in taxation. Let me repeat that. In a period of a couple of months, June 2019, Madam Speaker, to September 2019, sorry—July, August, September, in a three-month period, as a result of the police working with the Board of Inland Revenue, Madam Speaker, they were able to recover gaming tax liability of $29 million.

Madam Speaker, what is the real game the UNC is playing here today? Who are they really batting for? What is being hidden? What is not being said, Madam Speaker? How do you explain four years and four months of silence? How do you explain no written minority report? How do you explain trucking in MaPau workers and bringing them in as a temporary Senator in June 2015, under Siparia’s
Government, and then all of a sudden coming to say well, “dem same workers” that were supporting the unamended Bill, they are going to protest. Sound fishy to you, Madam Speaker? Something “doh” add up. Something just does not add up, Madam Speaker.

So Madam Speaker—[Interruption] Oh yeah, there are a few lock-ups to come, Madam Speaker, Siparia asking. So Madam Speaker, that is the job of the TTPS, and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service will do no doubt what they need to do. The hon. Member for Couva South asked if it is going to be a specialized unit by the TTPS. Yes. It has been formed already. It is a combination of the Cybercrime Unit, the SIU, the Anti-corruption Investigation Bureau, the Fraud Squad and the Financial Investigation Branch. They are up and running, they are hard at work, they have been doing it for over a year, because this Government returned the ACIB to the police because we did not want to be like anyone else.

Madam Speaker, everything raised by Couva South can be dealt with at committee stage; the line is drawn here today. Let us get on with the people’s business. I thank you. [Desk thumping]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appear to be more popular today than before. I do not know why. Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to contribute on this very important measure before us. And to begin by stating that it is not my objective to be unduly loud or hostile. It is not my objective to “buff” anybody opposite me on this matter, and to accuse anyone of any ulterior malice or ill-conceived motives, but rather to respond to some of the issues raised by the Member for San Fernando West, who himself was quite loud, unduly disturbed, and frustrated. And I have a
feeling that may have to do with the announcement last Sunday, because Madam Speaker, [Desk thumping] for cricket lovers, his fate is that of Malcolm Nash in 1968, who Gary Sobers slammed for six consecutive sixes in an over, and I am afraid that the Member for San Fernando West, like Malcolm Nash, will be on the receiving end of some strokes from a Sobers. [Desk thumping] So he was unduly frustrated and angry today, and it may well be that that has to do with matters external to this debate, and that has to do with matters external to the Bill.

Madam Speaker, I just want to deal with a couple of things quickly, because I do not want the Member for San Fernando West to succeed in confusing the national community as to what we are doing here today. [Desk thumping] And I do not want to repeat either statements made by the very, very eloquent and powerful presentation from the Member for Couva South. Himself, I believe that the Member for Couva South attended more meetings of those joint select committees than the Member for San Fernando West. [Desk thumping] So if the Member for San Fernando West could not understand Couva South it was really because the Member for San Fernando West may not have been present at those meetings of the Joint Select Committee.

Madam Speaker, I have in my hand a one page note. Madam Speaker, it is, and I quote, “Minority Report of the JSC on Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill, 2016”, dated 24th of June, 2019, and this is a Minority Report submitted by Wade Mark, member; Ganga Singh, member; Rudranath Indarsingh, member; and if you do not have it before you, you should blame the postman. You should not blame the members who authored this and have it signed on the 24th of June, 2019, and I have it in my hand.

But you know, you should not gallery that you do not have the Minority Report,
you do not have it. Clearly you made no attempt to get it as I did. [Desk thumping] Clearly, you wanted to come to gallery that it is not in the book, and Madam Speaker, it reminded me of other joint select committees before, and I want to predict joint select committees in the future, under this short-lived Government.

You know, because what they do is they hustle members generally, they hustle you by coming overnight with a report, and have members of the Opposition now, coming on a morning when they are presenting, and say “We intend to present this report, you have meeting, you have minority report, yes or no”? And when you say, “Look, we have to caucus, we have to put our heads together, we have to write, we have to type, we have to print, and a half an hour will not be enough to do it”, they come and they circulate a report and say, “look, you did not append it, you did not put it in to the secretary on time”.

But between June 24, 2019, to—what is the date today?—7th of February, 2020, surely you had enough time to get your hands on a minority report. [Desk thumping] It is there. And if you look to the majority report you will see that Sen. Mark, member Singh, and member Indarsingh, did not sign that report. So if they did not sign that report that means they did not agree with you. And if they did not agree with you, clearly, they would have a minority opinion, that would be reflected in a report.

So what was the big deal? “What you shouting and cryin and bawling” for the last two/three hours, when you have this available to you, and you are quarreling that it is not in the book in front of you. Could I then make about—what? Two or three copies and give you? It is one page, one page, the Parliament could give you that. So, I have in my hand the issues raised in a Minority Report which the Government refuses since June to February to get, a one page document. And look
it is here, 24th June. What is this, a fake? If it is a fake, report it to the police, that this is a fake document. But member Indarsingh has said that they submitted a Minority Report as we did with the Commissioner of Police matter, as we did with other matters before us here, and it is here. So it deals with regulations and so on. I will get to it, because it is a very important matter.

Madam Speaker, the Member for San Fernando West asked what side are we on? Who are we standing up for? I want to indicate to him, we are on the side of the workers. *[Desk thumping]* We are on the side of the industry. We are on the side of the companies, and we are on the side of Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]* If it is that you have to pass this to get some approval outside of Trinidad and Tobago, and you want to pass it today and you want to bully the Opposition, then say so. Say you want to come today and bully us because you have people waiting in Geneva, or Brussels, or Paris, and you told them by twelve o’clock Trinidad and Tobago time, it will be passed. So you could say that, but do not come today and ask us what side we are on. We are on the side of the people as we have always been, Madam Speaker. *[Desk thumping]*

So, that Minority Report, let me put it to rest. If you do not have it, it is because you do not want it, and if you do not want it, say so. Madam Speaker, there was a reference to an important report, this report of the decisive expert report on the regulations and so on. It was before the committee I believe, Governance Associates, and they praised and thanked the people there and so on. Madam Speaker, I am just quoting from the report, they are saying:

> “Having considered the drafts, we offer the following over-arching comments.

- They provide a workable foundation for the new regulatory scheme.
We would recommend that the settled Regulations…”

What does “settled Regulations” mean? Anybody knows? It means it is settled, it means it is fixed, it means it is final, it means we are not going to be changing, it is settled. Those regulations:

“…be the subject of consultation with the industry to ensure there are no unexpected issues.”

Now, when an international company like this talks about unexpected issues, you know what they are trying to say? “Doh try nuttin fishy, nah; doh try nuttin, doh try nuttin. Settle de matter first and don’t change yuh mind.” Now, why would a big company like this, paid as an external consultant, and well respected, tell the PNM Government, “We hope they have no unexpected issues” because they probably have a dossier that speaks about you already. They probably know that you have failed to give effect to the procurement legislation. [Desk thumping] They know that, they know that Lalchan Moonilal—no relation—has been complaining for years that you have not approved regulations.

**Hon. Member:** No resources.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** They know that the procurement regulator has been complaining, they know that the construction industry has been complaining, they know that the Opposition has been complaining, the DPP and others complaining, about your failure to give effect to a Bill passed in 2015. [Desk thumping] So having that knowledge they say, “We doh want no unexpected issues”.

What is so wrong with you finalizing the regulations, taking it to the stakeholders, getting their buy-in and coming to the Parliament with regulations? [Desk thumping] What is that? Why can you not do that? You want to pass a Bill because you want to satisfy external agencies and so on, fine with that. Bring the
regulations that is what the Minority Report says:

Regulations: We are of the firm view—the undersigned—how can we support and associate ourselves with a report unless the regulations are seen and ultimately sanctioned by the Joint Select Committee.

So there was a call for the Joint Select Committee to see and sanction those regulations. They have failed, they have failed terribly to do that. Today we are debating that matter, Madam Speaker.

You see, in this matter we are informed that those regulations could be extremely onerous and I will come to that now—somebody sent me on my telephone just a couple of minutes ago, Madam Speaker, what appears to be employment forms. They are going to impose a licensing framework and, Madam Speaker, everybody in this business here, if you are a car park attendant, you are cleaning the floor, you are bringing coffee and tea, you are taking money, you are giving chits, you are giving whatever they call themselves giving there, you have to have a licence. Twenty five thousand people might need a licence in this country. They give out, they specified in the Bill all, you know, that they have to do. Fit and proper and so on, we will get to that.

Someone sent me—in this industry—sent me a note just now, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, do you know that in filling out employment forms in this sector, filling out the forms and so on, you have to put—this is what they were proposing but they have not settled, because they cannot settle it because if the workers and the employers, and the organizations know what regulations they may be coming with, they will not support this Bill, as much as it is needed. We have never said that this Bill is not needed. Madam Speaker, you have to list your name, your residence addresses, date of birth, most recent occupation of parents, parents-in-
law, former parents-in-law.

**Hon. Member:** That is a Visa.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Guardians living or deceased, if retired or deceased, list address and occupation.

Madam Speaker, when you have in-laws and they become former, you “doh” want to go back, Madam Speaker. That is why you are no longer in-laws, because you “doh’ want to go back to check what was the work, what was the occupation of your former in-laws, Madam Speaker. This is what they are proposing to do, to create a regulatory environment where ordinary workers, Madam Speaker, men and women out there eking out a living, Madam Speaker, would have to apply and be granted a licence, and Madam Speaker, in this licensing regime that they are proposing, there are gaming operators, gaming owners, bookmakers, promoters, machine operators, machine distributors, technical operators, premises licence, personal licence, gaming machine licence, and any other licence which means you can create another one, Madam Speaker.

Given the number of licences that would be required to operate in the gaming sector, the cost for obtaining such licences, the rigid fit and proper criteria, there is a fit and proper criteria, Madam Speaker. Let me get to that quick, clause 41, I believe. It is mandatory that every applicant for a licence must be assessed subject to fit and proper criteria, Madam Speaker. This is onerous, an onerous requirement when one considers that many of the persons referred to as requiring a licence will not meet your fit and proper requirements.

Madam Speaker, the criteria under the Financial Intelligence Act, financial institutions are in an identical position to casinos with regard to money laundering and terrorist financing. If that underlying assumption is adhered to, then the
requirements for fit and proper ought to be the same and the classes of persons to whom it is required should be the same. Madam Speaker, it is not the same in this matter. So saying that you have these criteria and rules and regulations for other sectors in the financial arena, does not work for this sector because it is a different body of people, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, 99.9 per cent of the staff of financial institutions are not required to be licensed, but this Bill is demanding in effect that all the staff at a casino should be licensed. What is that about? So in the financial institution a few people, key people and so on, may need licences but in this, everybody. The carpark attendant, the person by the window collecting the money and so on. And I heard the Member talking about people taking money in casinos and bars and using it to launder. Madam Speaker, in those businesses, in that area you need an ID card, you need a bank account, it is governed by anti-money laundering laws and so on. So it cannot happen like that.

Madam Speaker, they speak about financial soundness, this is vague, uncertain, lacks objectivity. Adverse findings in terms of your criteria; Madam Speaker, that is extremely subjective. What is the minimum evidential threshold for honesty and integrity that Schedule 2, (f) and (g) speaks to? This is what is required. What do you need, a certificate of good character, one? You need what else? Banking institutions’ certificates and so on? Madam Speaker, they are telling us now that when as MPs we meet people, nobody should come to our office unless they have a certificate of good character. So, we cannot meet people as Members of Parliament who want to see us because we need to see a certificate of good character. That is where they reached. And that is where they are taking this country along a line of excessive and burdensome and distressful regulations that

UNREVISED
will lead to mass unemployment. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, it is now 4.30, we will take the suspension now. We shall resume at five o’clock. This House is now suspended.

4.30 p.m.: Sitting suspended.

5.00 p.m.: Sitting resumed.

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East, you have 14 minutes and 37 seconds of original time left. I do not know if you wish to make your application for the extended time now.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes.

Madam Speaker: So you are granted leave, so you will add the 15 minutes on, okay? [Desk thumping]

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. To return to a few issues that occupied our attention before the break, I wish to go into some detail on some of the issues that we touched earlier but did not detail. Madam Speaker, just to sum up the point here that the expert consultant was extremely careful to recommend that settled regulations be the subject of consultation with the stakeholders, and we would expect that the Government will give us some time frame within which there would be settled regulations and a time frame when the stakeholders could be consulted.

Madam Speaker, the Attorney General also indicated in his address that the Government in the last fiscal had collected I believe it was $71million in taxes from this sector. We are also informed that that $71million is less than the year before. So that nothing changed in the sector vis-à-vis the Bill. The Bill was not introduced, the Bill was not effected. So, if you are annually collecting less and less, then why is that happening? Given that the industry we expect is
mushrooming, you have more people in an industry, but every year you are collecting less tax dollars and that may well be, as we are informed by those in the sector, a result of the onerous and burdensome taxation framework that this very Government introduced into the gaming sector.

Because you see, the Government faced a problem, well, they faced several problems. But one of them is that given the mismanagement of the economy, the collapse of the energy sector in the aftermath of Petrotrin and what is happening there, the now ongoing, unravelling collapse of the megadeals of Dragon and Loran-Manatee and so on—because today we heard from the Prime Minister where this Loran-Manatee arrangement—

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1) please.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay, so Member for Oropouche East, I will give you a little latitude, but please, we are not talking about Loran-Manatee, it is just for you—I think you were saying it in the context of something about the economy and the effects. So, just keep it very narrow.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the latitude. So given the collapse of all these areas which will not bring revenue in the foreseeable future, the Loran-Manatee if I could say so, the Prime Minister indicated that it is not until 2025 that we will see development that would lead to revenue.

Given all of that, it is quite understandable that the Government will seek to find those areas, those sectors in the economy, to raise revenue and indeed the gaming sector is a key area for revenue collection. And this is why the Opposition has no difficulty in principle with legislation that seeks to create a framework where those who are involved in wealth creation in that sector pay their just due. So that is our principle position. But if you are already declaring that every year you are
collecting less, you must ask yourself why. Why are you collecting less?

Madam Speaker, a key concern that we have always had is with the workers in this sector, because the sector has what we believe to be between direct and indirect workers, about over in excess of 20,000 people. And when you profile and deconstruct that sector, it appears like a sector almost akin to the private security sector. It is in some cases low-wage. It is highly female. It is single parents. It is urban as opposed to rural in the majority. So, it is an industry that has a worker profile that is unlike other financial sectors. I put it to you that it will not be the same worker profile for the insurance sector. It will not be the same profile for the banking sector. It will not be the same profile for the manufacturing sector. So therefore, in making comparisons of treatment, one has to be careful because this is a sector that appears to have no other comparable. Possibly, the private security sector and as you know, we are also dealing with that matter by virtue of a joint select committee as well.

So when you look at the sector you must be very conscious at a time like this, where, whether we quarrel or not, or we quarrel over figures, significant amounts of people have lost their jobs by virtue of Petrotrin, direct and indirect workers. You are talking about thousands, in excess of 5,000. If you add all the plants in Point Lisas, you had manufacturing, you had this, you had that, I think just the American Chamber issued a statement a few days ago indicating—what?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** “Trinidad and Tobago at a standstill.”

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** “Trinidad and Tobago at a standstill.” Now, the Government will not want to hear that, they will not want to hear that. They said that the skilled people are leaving. Madam Speaker, there are people in this country today who tell you all they are waiting for is the general elections. [Desk thumping] They
want to know what is happening, otherwise they leave.

Now, if you take a position like this where you do not care about the workers, and in this sector, critical workers, single mothers, low income, low wage, flexi-work, those people in the sector, Madam Speaker, when we interview them, they tell us that sometimes this work is helpful, the time of work is good for them because they can spend time at the home, they can come out when the children are sleeping and go to work for a few hours, come back before the children wake up to go to school.

They work, some during the day, so it is a job that attracts a certain group of people.

Madam Speaker, when we chose to introduce this Bill in 2015, in the Senate, in the other place, they made reference of course to a representative from the sector, then Sen. Gibbs-Mohammed, and the Senator had some interesting things to say on the 09/06/2015, on the Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill, 2015. The Senator said and I quote, she was referring to “he”, and the “he”, I believe it was, was the Member for Laventille West:

“He spoke up for us and I remembered—and I shared this story just a while ago. Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds, the MP for Laventille, he met our union members and we expected him to come and listen to our plight, but instead, he gave a speech damning us all, many of whom were his…constituents and known to him for working in the industry.”

The Senator continued—this is the public record of course, I am quoting from:

“Mr. Hinds, I want to take time to tell you today that I have driven through Laventille and their surroundings, and many of our workers are very proud today to wear our membership club’s uniform…they are proud today to wear badges; they are proud that they are doing the right thing for their children;
they are proud to be exemplars in their community and in their families.
Many said that Mr. Hinds turned his back on us…we did not turn our backs.
The industry is a special industry and it supports many like the children, old
people—through our donations…various charity activities.”
And so on and so forth.

5.10 p.m.
And the Senate outlined the critical nature of this sector, but also the lack of
compassion, I believe, from then Senator now MP for Laventille West, and I heard
it in the tone of the last speaker when he made reference to, you know, corralling
workers and bringing them there and so on. That is the tone that you believe that,
you know, these workers are mindless—they cannot think for themselves, so it is
easy to corral them—when they are pursuing their collective interest, and their
collective interest is to have a stable job, a job that they can earn a reasonable
income, they are flexible in their employment. Yes, their sector contributes to tax
and it is an area that you could be proud of.
Madam Speaker, I have never been to Las Vegas, I confess. I have not been to
much of these gambling capitals of the world because, Madam Speaker, in my life
I do not think I have ever gambled away a dollar. I value money that way, and
today I am proud to be a recipient yesterday of what could be an increased amount
of income [Laughter] and I assure you I would not gamble away that at all. [Desk
thumping and crosstalk] So Madam Speaker—well, one more case and I am on
the list—so, I do not gamble but I am told that in those cities like the place off of
China, Macau, I believe it is and so on, they hire 80 per cent of the working
population. The people are proud to belong to that sector. They are proud that
they work in the hotels, in the casino and so on and they enjoy decent terms and
conditions of work. They do not feel lesser, they do not feel cheated, they do not feel abused and so on, and this is the sector we want to create.

Now, Madam Speaker, I gave you an employment profile of the sector, and I want to come back to this point. In our proposed legislation, and I just want to make a point. The Member for Diego Martin North/East, you know, sought to make heavy weather out of a minor issue, which is yes we know this is a Motion before us today, and the Bill is effectively the same Bill, but if you adopt the Motion and the amendments it changes fundamentally, in some cases, the Bill. So it is the Motion we are dealing with. Madam Speaker, the area that deals with the licencing requirements and so on, I just want to quote a few areas there in the Bill itself. When we look at the Bill that we look at, you have renewal of licence expiration, fit and proper criteria, Schedule 2 and so on.

Madam Speaker, I already called the various categories of workers that would be licensed and I believe it is an exhaustive list of people, of groups of people. And, Madam Speaker, when you look, for example, at the Schedule—Schedule 2 I believe it is in the package before us, Madam Speaker, and you look at this matter that they are calling “fit and proper” and I was taken aback by it, Madam Speaker, for several reasons because, you know, what exactly is fit and proper in a context? It must be contextual, it must be, you know, reasonable, it must be something that persons can satisfy—a criteria that they can satisfy and it must have, Madam Speaker, some measure of predictability. That is an important point. It cannot be left to the whim and fancy of any group of employers or any particular industry, specific persons, to apply whatever criteria they want.

So clause 41(1), for example speaks about mandatory that every applicant for licence must be fit and proper and, Madam Speaker, in the Schedule, which I just
want to look at very briefly here, Schedule 2, fit and proper and let me just read from it:

“Every person shall be considered fit and proper if that person is of good character, competent, honest, financially sound”

What is financially sound? Now, you can imagine that good and character is measured by a TTPS certificate; competent, well you can look at education or training or experience and find competence; honesty, well that will come from good character and maybe a reference or two, but what is financially sound? Is it that you need to get a statement from a bank, a credit union that you have certain amount of monies there? Is it that you are financially sound? What is it in this context, where you are dealing with workers and employees who may be at the lower rung of the educational ladder without financing that way?

Madam Speaker, people will come to our office and when they apply for a house, for example, I remember somebody will not have $2,000 in a bank, but coming to your office and say, “Well, I want to get a HDC house?” I say, “But how will you pay for this HDC house?” So “financially sound”, what does that mean? Reputable: now I do not know what is reputable? A letter from the imam, the pundit? Is it reputable for the Member for Diego North/East, because what is reputable to him is not reputable to me? [Desk thumping] I never build a wall that fall down. [Desk thumping] The people of Grenada are not looking for me. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, I was in a taxi in Grenada two years ago, and they ask me if I knew somebody, with great respect, named Imbert. I say I only know one and you cannot have two. They say the people of Grenada are looking for this man.

Madam Speaker, they showed me some edifice somewhere in Grenada where
something fall down. The person must be reliable and, you know, discharges responsibilities fairly.

“Every person who is, or is to be, an owner, director, shareholder, associate, trustee, committee member, manager or key employee of the licensee must be adjudged to be a fit and proper person to hold the particular position”

A key employee. Who is a key employee? What is a key employee? And fit and proper.

“In determining whether a person is fit and proper the board shall have regard to…

(a) integrity, fairness, honesty and reputation;

(b) competence, diligence and capability, and soundness of judgment;”

Now, “soundness of judgment”? Madam Speaker, there are Cabinet Ministers who cannot satisfy this. [Desk thumping]

“(c) financial soundness”

And so on. That comes again.

“Where the person, being assessed as to fitness and”—proper—”corporate entity, holds a minimum…share”

Well that, we could find out. Controlling shareholder, that good. I do not want to go there, but when you look, for example, Madam Speaker, Schedule 2 (5)(1)(c), I can go to that:

“(c) been the subject of any adverse findings or any settlement in civil proceedings, particularly in connection with banking or other financial business misconduct or fraud”

Now, they speak to a specific group of persons here, of course, but when you talk about adverse findings, you know, adverse findings of what? Of who? Of an
enquiry? Of an investigation? Of a court in a judgment? But if you do that again, Madam Speaker, half of them cannot serve as Cabinet Ministers. If you say you are not subject to adverse findings—[Desk thumping] Because an adverse finding could be anything. It could be a finding by who? It may be untested. It might be an adverse finding that is untested in a court of law, Madam Speaker. [Desk thumping]

And Schedule 2 (f) and (g):

“(f) an employment record which leads the Board to believe that the person carried out an act of impropriety in the handling of his employer’s business;

(g) been dismissed, asked to resign or resigned from employment or from a position of trust, fiduciary appointment or similar position because of questions about honesty and integrity”

Madam Speaker, this (g) in particular is troublesome. There are persons, for example, who in employment situations, matters arise involving impropriety, and what they do is they say, look, resign. Let us use Cabinet Ministers as an example. Matters arise in the public domain, you tell the Minister, “Look, Minister, we do not want to have an enquiry, we do not want to have anything to make trouble—put you in court, criminal prosecution, just resign” and they resign. But there are, Madam Speaker, adverse findings. They were asked to resign. So if someone is asked to resign, they cannot participate in this sector, if they were asked to resign for any reason, Madam Speaker, dealing with, of course, the issues before us here, and those are some of the troubling issues that we have raised.

Clause 45(2)(b) provides that the Commission may conduct a review where:

“the licensee or a person who exercises a function in connection with
the...activities has been convicted of a criminal offence”

Is that all criminal offences will trigger such a review, because they do not qualify it, Madam Speaker? It would be untenable for the Commission to be able to trigger its review powers of minor unrelated offences, and that can be clarified. However, the way the Bill is drafted there is indeed such a danger which could lead to abuse.

Madam Speaker, clause 45 of the Bill gives the commission the power to suspend a licence after a review has been conducted. Subclause (8) then proceeds to outline what the commission may, in particular, “have regard to when considering the suitability test” and subsection (8)(a)(d) outlines the different considerations which the commission may follow.

“(a) the integrity of the licensee or of any person who exercises”—a function—“or is interested in the licensed activities
(b) the competence”—financial audits, circumstances and so on.

Madam Speaker, we argue that these clauses are vague and uncertain. The commission has to consider the integrity of a person who exercises a function. It is to be assumed that all persons engaged in the business—is it assumed that all persons engaged in a business of a casino would indeed exercise a function? The Bill should define what function or, at least, what class of functions. This way the clause is framed properly, the licensee may have his licence suspended. What exists now, the person can have his licence suspended, Madam Speaker, by a misinterpretation of the law.

The various considerations also point to a person interested in the licensed activities. The term “interested” is not defined in the Bill and that is another issue. It is unclear what that means, and the question will arise as to whether it is vague,
it is uncertain and we have these cases all the time.

Madam Speaker, we pass legislation and we clap, we pat ourselves on the back, we go home happy—we phone Geneva, London and Paris and everybody happy, and then three months, you come with a list of amendments, 75 amendments, for a Bill that had 45 clauses. [Desk thumping] That is what we do. I am appalled that we passed the procurement legislation, and the Member for San Fernando West spoke about that. So no 48(1) on that. We passed legislation for four and a half years coming in five years, no regulations, but comes now with extensive amendments. So this procurement legislation will never see the light of day, never. [Desk thumping] And we have to ask ourselves whether this will suffer a similar fate, because as it is now, let us be real, this thing will not be implemented in the—what, five, six months that the Government has left. It will never be implemented. This is to satisfy their international, you know, partners in the various financial regulatory areas. So this will not be implemented before they demit office. I am almost certain, not almost, I am certain of that. So, Madam Speaker, they are doing it for another reason and, again, you know, that is their business.

The other area, just to dig deep into it, Madam Speaker, and the area raised by the colleagues in the minority report, the report they that do not have, because they claimed it is not attached to the document that they have, and I think in its seven months, they could not ask one question to get one page, particularly from two Members who they see every week. They see two Members every week of their life and could not ask one question to get one page. Now, if that is not delinquency, I do not know what is, Madam Speaker, I do not know what is.

Madam Speaker, offences and penalties and an issue raised called sanction. Sanctions for illegal gambling amounts to $5 million fine and 20 years
imprisonment; we believe they are draconian and oppressive. The Members were querying the proposed heavy sanctions and fines. They appear to be illogical and disproportionate when compared to other offences, and I am told even offences such as violent robberies.

Madam Speaker, a person who has been granted a licence, but who fails to place a licensed sticker in a conspicuous place can be fined $500,000 and sent to prison for 20 years. Now, where would you place—if you fail to place a sticker in a “conspicuous place”, where is that? Now, you go into these bars and you see room four above the kitchen door, you see room three somewhere else. Where are you placing it? You know, Madam Speaker, but hear the fine for that, $500,000, 20 years in jail. Madam Speaker, we are provided with—well MPs offices, but Ministries and so on, we have the picture of the Prime Minister and the President. I hope you do not put a fine like that, because these pictures do fall down sometimes and you cannot see it, and you put a fine that if you cannot see the Prime Minister picture in a conspicuous place, you get 20 years and $500,000? It cannot be so, you know, it just cannot be like this. Madam Speaker, surely, there must be a fine, because this thing has legal repercussions and so on, but you have to rethink these kinds of fine. Which other body of law they want to compare? Which other body of law? If you do not have room four and room three all over the rum shop, is that a fine of $500,000, four years in jail? Is that? If it is let me know.

In the case of a normal casino patron who sneaks a chance to cheat at a game, that same person can be fined $1,000 and sent to prison for one year. So somebody who cheats will get one year. Somebody who does not place a sign in a conspicuous position, 20 years in jail and the Government has no problem with
that. They see no problem with that. They say that is good, we can do that, and while they are doing that, on the one hand, they want to put people in jail, they announced all the grand measures to take people out of jail.

Madam Speaker, the Rehabilitation Fund and the Development Fund and so on, I heard, you know, Government Members making heavy weather of this and, yes, this is an area of—there is something called the addiction of chance, chance developed in your bloodstream, so to speak, by little things. Do you think you should take an umbrella today because it will rain, yes or no? And you take a chance. Chance is in a bloodstream—and I used the word “bloodstream” from a non-scientific point of view. Human beings live their life with chance. You believe that it will not have traffic at a certain time, so I would go to the supermarket at that time. That is a chance. All people go through that. Some will go much further because they live on chance. They play—Member for Arima—on a Sunday a game of cards. The Member for Arima is a very, very, enthusiastic card player, not good, but enthusiastic. [Crosstalk] Well, Madam Speaker, I am not in the age range to play with him, because when we met, I think there was another table for persons my age.

Madam Speaker, you throw money on the table—I am told, given the legislation how it operates now, Barataria/San Juan—and you make a chance, you could be breaking the law. You go to a wake in the night, you could be breaking the law. The wappy player in the village breaking the law. So you need to fine tune this so that you understand that part of the sector.

Now, when you live in the bourgeois areas down on the north-west and so on, you have your boat, you have your Mustang and so on, you do not think of rural Trinidad and what happens in these circumstances. You do not, Madam Speaker.
And you are selling it, because I am sure there is another one you are procuring before demitting office. [Desk thumping] So you do not think of these things, but I ask the Government to please consider this.

Madam Speaker I want to warn the Member for Diego Martin North/East, defaming me, you will pay a high price. If you defame me, you will pay the penalty. So, Madam Speaker, the matter now concerns regulations, the matter concerns interpretation, the matter concerns the board appointment and so on, and I want to just amplify one matter there. This is a multi-sectoral type of industry. You have different groups of people, you have different financial people, you have investors, you have what is called worker representatives or organizations of workers and so on, and the easiest thing to do was to include the various sectors in the appointment of the board. That was the easiest thing to do.

If you include various sectors in the appointment of the commission, so to speak, and we have examples of that. Over the years, we have been doing that and in every part of, you know, public life we have been doing that, Madam Speaker, so that you take the stakeholders, whoever and whatever they are, including banking, finance and so on, and you put them on your commission—they are commissioners—and you work with that. I think WASA has that type of arrangement as well, and other types of boards. What else? The RHAs, the RHAs as well have that. So what is the big deal about having stakeholder participation in this sector which is a multi-billion sector, Madam Speaker? And the—[Crosstalk] you want me finish? Okay. I will, because, I mean, if they want to respond to me eagerly, I would not take all the time. But the issue of key persons, I think I raised that already, in relation to licensed businesses, anyone who is an owner, director, controlling shareholder and so on. Again, it lacks objective criteria in that—I am
just going through, Madam Speaker, to ensure I have all the points.

Now, I want to go to clause 6(6), establishment constitution of this commission; clause 6(6) I believe is where I want to be. Madam Speaker, and I think that was the subject of some amendments as well when they come through. The commission shall be managed by a board appointed by the President on the advice of the Minister. We all know what that means. This formula for appointment can lend itself to all manner of abuse and political interference and bias. You know, when you control huge amounts of money and revenue and so on, it is different from when you are in a state enterprise that really implements public policy. So let us make a distinction with state enterprises. There are some that implement Cabinet policy, State policy. There are some that really manage enormous wealth, and this is an example of the latter.

Now, you will have political appointments on state boards because they implement Government policy. Where you have boards and commissions that manage private sector wealth, so to speak, you must have a different formula for appointing commissioners and boards. I do not know if they can understand that. It is expected that such a significant commission, given its novelty as well, would be independent in the same way that the procurement board is contemplated. We recommend that the appointment to the board be reformulated, Madam Speaker, to have stakeholders nominated by representative bodies and ensure that the—

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East, your time is now spent.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity. [Desk thumping]

**The Minister of National Security and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam
Speaker, we are here this afternoon, as we heard from the Minister of Finance, in piloting the Bill, after many, many years of toing and froing with respect to this industry. At the outset, Madam Speaker, every civic minded and right-thinking citizen would agree that this is one sector, one industry, that requires immediate regulation. There can be no doubt that this is an industry that has the opportunity for many abuses, and many abuses that affect our citizenry at all different levels. So today what we are here today, finally, I say, is to implement proper regulation of the industry. [Desk thumping]

A short while ago we heard from the Member for Oropouche East and in his contribution he mentioned some other jurisdictions that their whole economy is driven by gaming and gambling, for example, Macau and Las Vegas. These are but two that fall into that category. What the Member failed to tell the population is those are two of the most highly regulated jurisdictions with respect to gaming, and that is what we are here to do today. Because you see at the outset, Madam Speaker, for the record of the Hansard and for the population, through you, to understand what we are dealing with, this is a thriving industry in Trinidad and Tobago, and it is estimated that it yields approximately $16 billion a year. So, let us put that on the record.

All of the talk and attempts to pull on heart strings, the fear-mongering of—directing at workers at different levels and going after the lowest level workers, I will deal with that but, at the outset, what we are being called upon here today as the representatives of Trinidad and Tobago is to regulate a $16 billion industry, and I am certain that the amount of tax that flows from that $16 billion industry is minimal, de minimis, as we would say in law, compared to the industry. So one of the holes that we are called upon to plug here today, Madam Speaker, with the
greatest of respect, is tax evasion and that is what this is about today and I will get into that further.

This is an industry that employs an estimated 7,000 persons. It is reported that in Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker, there are over 200 private members clubs operating and over 20,000 amusement gaming machines spread throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and anyone who is on the ground, anyone who is accustomed to travelling throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, including in the most rural of areas, would have realized a phenomenon has sprung up over the last five to 10, maybe 15 years, that every little hole in Trinidad and Tobago now has these gaming machines. What we have not talked about as yet for the evening, Madam Speaker, is the addiction and the effect of addiction on many families, how it destroys family life, how these machines are set up in an unregulated manner not only denying the Board of Inland Revenue the taxation from it, but also strategically set up in every bar even including in small parlours, as we call it.

When I walk in my constituency—up to yesterday—and you go into the small parlours, they now have two machines in there. The bigger ones, the restaurants have machines and they are set up strategically so that persons whilst they are waiting, they are there plugging their money away. We have not discussed that here today. [Desk thumping] We have not discussed the need for regulation, we have not discussed the type of criminality that springs up out of this gaming industry, at all levels.

[MR DEPUTY SPEAKER in the Chair]

So, let me start, Mr. Deputy Speaker, also by talking about tax evasion and one of the reasons and the necessity for proper regulation and the setting up of a
commission, because every serious jurisdiction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the world that faces gaming—be it Las Vegas, be it Nevada, be it New Jersey, be it Macau, Bahamas, even we dealt with Ireland at the instigation of the Member for Chaguanas West, if I remember correctly—every single jurisdiction has a regulated industry, and what we are seeking to do here today is set up a properly established commission to regulate it, to collect the taxes, to make sure that people are protected.

The gaming industry in Trinidad and Tobago—and we must face it frontally here this afternoon—is one of the main outlets and opportunities for money laundering. It is an outlet for money laundering, and one wonders why would anybody who wants to stop criminality in Trinidad and Tobago oppose the proper regulation of this unregulated industry? It is also being used internationally for terrorist financing, because it is very easy for it to take place.

I was just in a conversation during the tea break reminded that it is also in Trinidad and Tobago a major leakage point for foreign exchange. The Members opposite come here screaming bloody murder about lack of foreign exchange in Trinidad and Tobago. The gaming industry is a major leakage point for foreign exchange and let me say why, because the vast majority of the big casinos in Trinidad are not locally owned. They are foreign owned by owners in Turkey, by owners in other places throughout the world, and I guarantee you they are not repatriating the money and the funds they make into TT dollars. So it spurns that whole economy of illegality and the leakage of foreign exchange.

And I also want to put on record, at the outset of the demonetization exercise that was conducted by this Administration, when the Minister of Finance and I sat with the financial institutions for the implementation, one of the first questions I asked
is: How many financial institutions bank casinos in Trinidad? It came down to one, because the banking industry, the financial industry in Trinidad and Tobago took a decision years ago to get out of the business of banking the casinos.

5.40 p.m.
And the sole reason for that is because they run the risk of being de-risked. They run the risk of being blacklisted as banking and financial institutions, because, you see, when a casino owner turns up there with their tens of millions of dollars in cash because people do not go to the casino, I assume, with cheques. We have heard one of the stories from the Member for San Fernando West, we all know what happens, the money laundering and the illegality of people going, purchasing chips, leaving it on a table. There was a story of a former Member of Government, a former Minister of Government, going all the way to Las Vegas and a contractor meeting him there or his son there and leaving chips on a table for collection, and those chips were not gambled; they were taken right there to the booth to exchange for cash. A classic example of the type of illegality, criminality and money laundering that takes place, but take note Trinidad and Tobago, we are here today to finally regulate an industry that demands regulation. [Desk thumping] Addiction, many, many families globally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are affected by the scourge of addiction to gambling. I remember witnessing it once, the only time I ever went into a casino in Antigua, and it was a friend who had encouraged me to go, and I watched him spend the money he had and start to ask for more money and eventually he asked me to borrow my credit card because he was convinced he was about to strike lucky, and immediately when I saw that I understood how this could destroy lives, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So we as 41 Members of Parliament elected by the people of Trinidad and Tobago today are called upon today to
regulate this industry and not to come here, as we heard an admission from the Member for Oropouche East a short while ago, he said, “I am here today on the side of the workers”; fine, I will talk about workers, but what was so compelling to me and so interesting is an admission on the Hansard, he said, “I am here for the industries and the companies.” That admission came from the Member for Oropouche East.

We heard the hon. Attorney General make some startling suggestions in his contribution and we deal with addiction in this legislation. We deal with addiction in this legislation through two funds. This is also about terrorist financing and anti-money laundering, and I heard the mockery from the Member for Oropouche East, “Oh, is for Paris, is for Brussels, is for here, is international obligations”, and that is the same attitude, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remind the people of Trinidad and Tobago, that is the exact same attitude by the Member for Oropouche East that led us to the brink of being delisted.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** And who signed us up for that?

**Hon. S. Young:** They—well, we were part of FATF, but they signed us up onto Global Forum, and, yes, there are international obligations. The Attorney General from day one has been travelling all over the world to try and satisfy our obligations and convince people not to de-risk Trinidad and Tobago, so we would not lose our correspondent banking.

I remind the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, the population, we were taken to the brink with the United States of America with FATCA legislation where you would not have been able to pay your children’s school fees in the United States. You would not have been able to do those types of things because we would have lost our correspondent banking. This is another potential; it is not why the legislation is
being passed but it allows us to tick that box and there is nothing wrong with that because they signed us up to the obligation, [*Desk thumping*] and it is irresponsible to take the country to that brink. So what we are here to do today is we are to debate about the establishment of a Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Commission. And what does this Commission do, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Before I go there, it really bothered me to come here to this House where every single one of us is elected by the electorate outside and to hear once again in what is becoming a disturbing modus operandi, the way of doing business by this time the Member for Oropouche East as he blatantly attempted to mislead not only the Members in here, not only the House in here, but the population outside.

I listened carefully to a minority report because, you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I sat on the committee and this is a committee that we have been sitting for almost three years to try and make sure we get this right, and the Member for Couva South was on the committee, the Member for Chaguanas West was on the committee and we all contributed. The progress of that committee, I am happy to say, was, for the vast majority, a mature progress. Contributions were listened to, and I will get to contributions in a short while, back to the disturbing honesty and blatant attempt to mislead the population of Trinidad and Tobago about a minority report. So, you see, the first time we hear about a minority report is coming here today in the debate, so I turned to my colleagues who also sat on the committee and I said, “What minority report?” because today I asked the Parliament for a copy of the papers for the debate and when I looked at it, our report, the report of the committee is dated November 20, 2019.

The report of the committee, signed by the chairman of the committee, Minister Imbert, is dated the 20th of November, 2019. We come here for the first time,
screaming and shouting, “There is a minority report signed by three Members”. What was the date? Go back to the *Hansard*. Trinidad and Tobago, go back and see what is the date of the minority report as proffered by the Member for Oropouche East today in his continued attempts to mislead the population of Trinidad and Tobago. You know what is the date? The 24th of June, 2019. How could you have a minority report 24th of June and the report is signed on the 20th of November, 2019.

**Mr. Hinds:** You mean he lied?

**Hon. S. Young:** How does that happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The next thing you are hearing a lot of talk about, again, in an attempt to mislead the population, which I find offensive, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is regulations, “You must have the regulations first”. Let us take it step by step. The regulations that have been put before the committee, put before the committee and gone through by the experts, are not regulations created by this Administration. Those regulations were created by a UNC administration, and I put it here to the population of Trinidad and Tobago today, via Cabinet Minute 733 of March 26, 2015, a Cabinet decision taken by a UNC Government for the establishment of a regulatory regime for the gambling industry in Trinidad and Tobago:

Cabinet agreed to approve the undermentioned documents regarding the legal and regulatory framework for the gaming industry.

Copies of which were attached to the Note and it lists the exact same regulations that were brought to the committee, looked at by the committee, looked at by the experts.

So point number one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, their regulations, not a word changed. Point number two, which is where I find it to get offensive, how could you pass
regulations, put forward regulations until you have the parent legislation?—because if the parent regulation, the Bill is not passed to become an Act, that is where regulations spring from. So to come here today and to attempt to mislead the population that we cannot support this Act, we cannot support this Bill because there are no regulations, first of all, it is your regulations. It is your regulations, we have not changed a word. But, secondly, until we pass the Bill you cannot get to the regulations, so why keep throwing up the smoking mirrors?

**Hon. Member:** To protect Ma Pau.

**Mr. Imbert:** Exactly.

**Hon. S. Young:** So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I then get to the body of the Act that is before us because we need to tell the population what we are doing, and immediately when one goes to some of the amendments made, I am proud to be part of that committee, because you see, what happens in Trinidad and Tobago is a lot of foreign entities and foreigners come here, establish their establishments, their casinos, et cetera, and as I said a short while ago, massive leakage of foreign exchange because they are repatriating their profits and the money being made in US dollars back to wherever they come from, but you see, there is also an element of criminality.

I remind the population of Trinidad and Tobago, a few years ago, I think, if I remember correctly, it would have first come to the fore in about 2014, there was a certain American individual who was tracked down to Trinidad by the US authorities, I believe from New Jersey, and a request made to extradite him. And you know what it was about, that he was using one of his money laundering operations in Trinidad, a casino in one of the larger mall establishments, Grand Bazaar, if I remember correctly, and he was wanted for money laundering and tax
evasion in the United States. He did not come into Trinidad for money laundering and tax evasion of TT dollars. So that is the proof of the foreign exchange leakage but also the criminality, and that is how the US authorities deal with it. But what we are hearing here today by the contributions and the jokes and trying to wash it down is, “Leave it, leave it unregulated; leave it as it is, you are attacking the workers”. I will get to the workers, there is no attack on workers in this legislation. So, again, that is an attempt to mislead the population and to scare the workers. This will end up protecting—so let me get to it. Immediately when I saw the definition of “associate”, the definition of “controlling shareholder” and the definition of “key person”, what we have done there, and I am saying through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, is we are capturing those persons, because, you see, what also happens is the real owners, the beneficial owners of these establishments do not always put themselves in the forefront. So they will send other people to appear as though they are the owners because it is part of a money laundering operation or they do not want to be known, they want to be below the radar. What we are proposing here today is that once you have even a 5 per cent shareholding or any beneficial ownership, any controlling say in it you need to be captured and you need to go through a due diligence process to get the licence. That has to redound to the benefit of every single citizen and law-abiding citizen, because at the end of the day you want to hold somebody responsible, the man who is living wherever he is living, living the high life at the detriment sometimes of those who are coming into their establishments. This is good law.

So we go then, if I may, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the objects of the Act, because I think it is important that the population know the objects of this Act
found at section 5. The first one is to protect minors and other vulnerable persons. I am reading from the Act, the Act that we are being asked to pass here today. The objects of this Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are to:

“(a) protect minors and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling;”

Who could oppose that? Who in this House would stand up here today and say, no?

“(b) ensure that gambling is conducted in a fair, open and responsible manner;

Laudable.

(c) prevent gambling from being a source of crime, being associated with crime or being used to support crime;”

So, you see, some of the measures that the Member for Oropouche East was attacking, in his normal manner being the class clown about, these are serious measures to deal with crime and criminality, and it is stated here. It is to prevent persons from taking advantage of the disadvantaged in our society.

“(d) ensure compliance with written laws…”

We took off “international laws” and we put:

“…written laws for anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing in line with FATF recommendations.

(e) ensure consumer protection; and

(f) provide for the collection of taxes.”

We have heard here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is estimated to be a $16billion industry a year; $16billion of a $52 billion budget. Do the math, that is over a fifth of our annual budget and we must not regulate this? We must not tax it? We must
not protect the vulnerable and the minors? Is that what we are being told here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker?—and that it must contribute to the economy by protecting employment, not destroying employment. That is the narrative they want to sell. It is a false narrative. Let me jump to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In 2015 when this legislation came under a different administration, we have heard enough about that, in 2016 when it came and it was laid here all of a sudden there were protests outside the Parliament. There were people coming, and you heard the Member for Oropouche East say, “You are attacking”—[Interruption] Yes, I remember that, they reached outside the Minister of Finance’s house via maxi taxis, all in the same uniform. [Interruption] Correct. And let me tell you what happened, because I can talk about that first hand as I sat in my constituency office at the corners of Observatory Street and Quarry Street, one of the most challenged areas in east Port of Spain, some of them came to see me and you know what they told me, they told me that the owners of the casinos basically told them that if they did not put on those jerseys and they did not go and do what they did, they would be fired.

You know what is the frightening thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is absolutely nothing in this legislation that any law-abiding owner of a casino should fear, because this is not going to reduce the amount of money, this is not going to stop people from coming into your establishment. What it may do is ensure that you pay tax. But they were telling their workers that if this legislation is passed they would lose their jobs, and you heard it being repeated here today; that is not true because on the other hand you then hear the Member for Oropouche East talk about Ma Pau and Las Vegas and how workers there are proud to be part of a booming industry. Why is it that if you are called upon to follow the law, to pay
tax, to ensure that people are properly looked after, you will lose your job? There is a nothing in here that requires the small single mothers and the small people in our constituencies to go through any process that is going to mean they cannot get a job. So I am telling them, I am putting them on notice today, all of that is being done to create a sense of fear, to create a sense of panic and it is not real. It is not here in these pieces of paper before us.

I then go to the qualifications of the commissioners because you see, as is usual, it is an attack on who should appoint and what should be appointed, et cetera, and these commissioners who will be appointed would only want to do what the Minister wants; it is not so. There is nothing different with what you are looking at here as to what applies for T&TEC, which is a commission, as applies to WASA, which is a commission, nothing unusual. But let me show here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the persons we are calling upon to form this body to look after the interest of Trinidad and Tobago shall be qualified to be members of the board by reason of their work and experience in the gambling industry. So all of the screams and the cries again, the falsehoods, the misinformation, the attempts to mislead that there is no stakeholder representation, you have heard it repeated over and over by the Member for Oropouche East, again, a blatant attempt to mislead the population.

The first qualification for a member of the commission is that they must be:

“…by reason of their work and experience in the gambling industry or fields relating to law, financial, information technology, economics, management, social work or law enforcement.”

What could be challenged in that? What is wrong with that? It goes to the appointment of a very important committee for the first time, an audit and regulatory committee at section 12.
I would not waste time with that, but let us now go to what this legislation is calling upon the commission to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This commission and the need for the formulation of this commission is firstly to:

“regulate and control the operation of gambling in Trinidad and Tobago.

(b) provide such information to other regulatory and government agencies, including the Board of Inland Revenue…”

Is that what the fear is about? You do not want a commission because you do not want the BIR to know how much money you are taking, how much of the $16 billion pie is yours? And then it also includes the Financial Intelligence Unit, the FIU, the Integrity Commission, Customs and Excise Division, the Commissioner of Police and the Betting Levy Board. Any of those bodies or entities are challengeable, offensive, for the information to be provided by the regulatory body too, you can immediately understand why each of them is like that.

One important point that has not been touched on at all, in fact, it was skirted over by the Member for Oropouche East, the commission is also to set up a Rehabilitation fund and a Development fund, and I want to tell the population of Trinidad and Tobago, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what that fund is about and how well-thought-out this legislation is and why it should be passed. I mentioned on a couple of occasions families that are destroyed by addiction and this is one type of addiction, gambling. You have had massive international sporting heroes caught up in it and it has affected their lives, well, it is not about them, it is about the same small people that we are called upon as parliamentarians to protect, the small people are who this legislation protects. It is quite the opposite of what is attempted to be sold here today.

“The Rehabilitation Fund is established to assist non-governmental
organizations and other groups working with vulnerable persons and their families suffering the effects of gambling addiction and other forms of harm or exploitation associated with gambling.”

So what we are looking to do is allow these bodies, these NGOs—and they came to us in consultation. Some of those bodies came to us in consultation and told us, and some of the members were recovering addicts, how it broke up families. What we are doing is setting up a fund, let the same casinos and other gaming houses provide the money to finance these bodies. That is laudable.

“The Development Fund is established to assist persons in the area of sport, social and community work, art and culture.”

So, again, if you are going to have this industry at least let some good flow from it for the better of the population of Trinidad and Tobago. But of course nothing, nothing is said about that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon.Member, your initial speaking time has elapsed, you have an additional 15 minutes, you care to avail yourself?

Hon. S. Young: Yes, please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Proceed.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. [Desk thumping] Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were hearing a lot about “fit and proper criteria” and again, in a typical attempt to stir up panic and to stir up concern that this is some sort of draconian, and the words were being used, “It is onerous legislation”, onerous for whom? Onerous for those who share in the $16 billion industry? But when they operate in other jurisdictions they all have to abide by regulations; every single other jurisdiction they are operating in they abide by regulations.

Let me tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of those machines I spoke about,
the 20,000-odd estimated machines, what is envisaged by this is that each one of those—because it is possible via technology—would be connected to the commission, and that allows us to be able to properly establish the data as to how the machines are being used and to tax them. So the scream and cries about, “If yuh tax meh machines”—you remember when we came in 2016 and it could not be done with the passage of the Bill because the Bill was sent to the joint select committee, the Minister of Finance in that budget put a number of additional taxes on these tables and these machines all over the country. At the time they cried bloody murder, they said, “People will lose their jobs”; they said, “nobody”—has that happened? Not a single machine was pulled off. We have more. As I say, anybody who walks on the ground will see how these machines have infiltrated Trinidad and Tobago. And even though the law says not under a certain age, I have seen the small children going into the same parlours and putting their little money in, and what are we doing as elected Members of Parliament to protect them?—sit here and throw words, sit here and attack, sit here and mislead. That is not what we were elected to do, with the greatest of respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Certainly that is not how I see my responsibility, and I would be surprised if any Member in here sees his or her responsibility to destroy the fabric of what is good in our society or to protect the young and vulnerable as this piece of legislation states, is an intent.

“Fit and proper criteria”. I would like to put on record, not a single word in the “fit and proper criteria” of this Act found at Schedule 2 has been changed. So you know what that means, it is the identical language that when they on the other side sat in Government brought to the Houses in 2015, the House of Representatives and the Senate, it is exactly what they approved as a Cabinet and were pushing
through Parliament. And the reason it remains unchanged is because the committee, including the Members who sat on the other side and contributed did not see it fit, no pun intended, to change a word. So why come here today and attack “fit and proper” and why would you challenge that persons associated in this industry should not be fit and proper? Why should we not do what we can to stem criminality and to cut it off? How could anyone argue against that, the workers? I would not get into the responses of the collapse of the energy industry because it has nothing to do with this debate but it is a complete falsehood. Again, the hon. Prime Minister came here today, he made a statement that is very, very clear as to the benefit of Manatee, but still the attempts being made to tie it up as Loran and Manatee. Worker profiles, we heard it, the dog whistling, the attempts to bring fear, the attacks on the Member for Laventille West, saying that they are in his constituency and they came to him for protection in 2015; workers, do not be fearful because there is nothing this Government would do on this side to destroy your livelihood. In fact, what this legislation is seeking to do is to protect you [Desk thumping] against the vultures who are your employers, to make sure that your employers do what is right, to make sure that we establish funds to help the communities, and that is what it is about.

There is nothing being introduced here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that could legitimately affect casino workers. It is a $1 billion industry; $16 billion. That is bigger—I suspect that is quite a lot of our manufacturing sector.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** It may be part of the Government revenue—

**Hon. S. Young:** Correct. Yes, because our Government revenue is around in the 30s, 40s, so it is almost half, and it is not being taxed. There is massive tax evasion and that is one of the holes we are seeking to plug here today. So do not
give into the fearmongering. When the Bill was introduced in 2015 it was good enough then, it has only been improved now. There were attempts to cherry-pick and pull out some of the penalties, some of the sentences. If those are legitimate concerns let us deal with it in the committee stage.

We have said we could deal with those types of things, but they are not—because what is wrong with a casino owner who does not place his sign? That is one of the points being made, if you do not place your sign and your licence in a conspicuous place a fine of $500,000 or 20 years in jail. First of all, those are maximum sentences; secondly, there is nothing unique in that, but it showed me that persons may not be familiar with being VAT registered, because if you are VAT registered the law calls upon you to have your VAT certificate conspicuously shown. As the Member for Oropouche East said, when you have licences to serve liquor they have to be conspicuously shown. So it is nothing new, you are not going to be jailed because you put it in the wrong place. Stop the fearmongering, stop selling that.

6.10 p.m.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say here today, without fear of contradiction, that the reasons for passing this law, finally, and for bringing it to this level of debate for us to see the passage, to regulate a $16 billion industry, to regulate the spider web that touches on the lives of the small people and the big people, because many wealthy people have lost their wealth through gambling. Today we are being called upon to regulate it. We are being called upon to put a stem to some of the criminality that might flow from it, and with the greatest of respect to all of my colleagues, I can see no plausible, legitimate, justifiable, law-abiding reason as to why this industry should be unlike everything else in TrinidadandTobago and
remain unregulated. We have to protect Trinidad and Tobago. We have to protect our citizens. We have to protect our foreign exchange, and we have to ensure that we pass right laws like the rest of the world. The Attorney General has told us today, we are the only jurisdiction in the world that does not regulate gambling and gaming falling under an IMF report. How could that be something that we want to continue as people of Trinidad and Tobago?

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I thank you for the opportunity to having contributed to this Bill, and I say that the people of Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West stand fully behind the passage of this piece of legislation and say it took too long, but we are here now, let us pass it. Thank you.

The Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am grateful to you for providing me with an opportunity to make a relatively brief contribution in this debate.

I have noticed in the course of these deliberations, and I have heard from the Member for Diego Martin North/East, I have heard from the Member for San Fernando West, I have heard from the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, all of whom alluded to the fact that the UNC, during the committee stages, when these measures were taken to a joint select committee of the Parliament for as long as four years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and their utterances today in this debate, I have noticed that they continue to be obstinate and to be obstructionists. I noticed that the Attorney General was exasperated at their behaviour. He pointed out, as I just said, that for four years we were in the JSC, the Joint Select Committee and the Members opposite went through every single clause chaired by, of course, the Member for Diego Martin North/East. They produced no minority report, but alas, the Member for Oropouche East rose and produced a document
which he flaunted, and he told us that in fact there was a minority report. We now know that that was simply not the truth. I could understand why the Attorney General was exasperated—no minority report.

In the course of law when three judges or five sit in a matter on appeal, it is not unusual to have a dissenting judgment, meaning one or two. A minority of the judges may express a view on the case that is different from the finding of the majority. It is called a “dissenting judgment”, akin to a minority report. But importantly, in that dissenting judgment, the learned judge or judges would give logical and acceptable reasons for their diversion from the view of the majority. It is done to elucidate on the issues, to stimulate the intellect, and to provide clarification on the law, good reason.

One would have thought that if the UNC had a minority report, they would have written it, and they would have got up here today and present, for the benefit of the Parliament and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, coherent and logical reasons as to the reason why they cannot support this. But no, they spent four years in the Joint Select Committee. They agreed or pretended to agree with everything. I understand one Senator, Sen. Wade Mark, took every opportunity to delay and to tarry—typical UNC strategy. And then today they come to object and refuse to give support to these measures. That is typically the behaviour of the UNC. The big question, of course, is why?

They raised the constitutionality issue and the AG pointed out to them how banal that is. We have provisions in here under the enforcement clause, which I will come to later, that deal with the obtaining of a warrant in order to give access to premises, in order to ensure compliance with this law. The AG promised to show them, again, all of the basic cases, whether it is De Freitas and others, as to why
you can touch on these matters without the need for a specified majority. The law is clear about that.

Like the cannabis decriminalization project that we took and effected recently, while we decriminalized marijuana, the commission that investigated it found that, notwithstanding its illegality, there was widespread use of marijuana for all kinds of purposes, including recreational, for decades; for over 100 years really in the Caribbean region, including Trinidad and Tobago. Similarly, while we know as a fact that the gambling industry is unregulated, giving rise to all kinds of issues: economic issues, criminal issues, money laundering issues, financing terrorism issues, social issues. Unregulated as it is, it is widespread in its application and existence around Trinidad and Tobago. In other words, it is real.

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West read and he pointed out there are over 20,000 machines everywhere, in little country districts, in rural areas. You go into a drugstore, you go into a corner shop, you go into a “watering hole”, a rum shop, there is a machine. It is in widespread use, what is missing is proper regulation.

The Government, having cooperated with the UNC in the Joint Select Committee and the Independents—and as for the Independents they signed on to this report and they agreed. They are on the side of agreement on this, but not the UNC. They did not sign it. They did not produce a minority report, and come here today, four years later, to frivolously tell us why they cannot support it. All kinds of foolish reasons. But I, the Member for Laventille West, I am not surprised at their behaviour, I have seen that time and time and time again. “Dey doh want nothing good for dis country.” We know that; I know that.

And came here today to give what I consider to be the most putrid and unfair
impression of the people who support them in the national community. If I had to judge their supporters on the basis of their behaviour in this Parliament consistently, I would think very poorly of them. But I know they may represent them constitutionally and electorally, but they do not represent the behaviour and the ethos and the well-meaning of a large cross section of the people who they represent, which is why they are in opposition today.

**Mr. Charles:** For a short time.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And they are doing no justice to themselves. If I had to judge their supporters on the basis of their behaviour, I would think nothing of them, but I would not do that because I know differently. We would learn here today that the regulations—and I want the public to understand that when you pass an Act of Parliament, very often it requires regulations which we, as lawyers, say are like the grease that oils the wheels of the law. It requires some subsidiary regulations to make sure that the thing works. The regulations that we speak of, several of them, were drafted by the UNC when they were in government, and what we present here today is identical to what they drafted. But yet they have the temerity and the gall and the shamelessness to come here today, putting up frivolous reasons as to why they cannot support it.

I just want their supporters to know how unprincipled and without parliamentary class and conduct they could be. I want them to understand that. In any event, as has been already pointed out, you cannot get to regulations and regulations would be of no effect. They would be invalid because they have to be attached to parent legislation—

**Mr. Charles:** I have heard that point from the Member for Diego Martin North/East—I have heard it five times.
Mr. Imbert: What Standing Order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled. Proceed Member.

Hon. F. Hinds: Spirits have no form, shape or age, especially evil spirits. 

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, and when you find that level of illogical—and when you find their behaviour strange, for me it does not surprise me, it obviously lends itself to all—because what can be misunderstood will be misunderstood. And one of the things persons might extrapolate or glean from their otherwise inexplicable behaviour must of course be the possibility—because, you know, in Parliaments around the world, parliamentarians have been arrested and charged and disciplined and deselected when it is found out that they are representing sometimes for fees, lobbyists. It is not unknown in the world—[Interruption]—yes, and contributors. It is not unknown in the world that big businesses, people who have vested interests, in the case of this gambling business, the unregulated operators who have a free sheet to do what they want in Trinidad and Tobago, it is not unknown that they are the ones who look for some friends, vulnerable, willing friends and offer some money, whether it is for a political campaign or otherwise. [Interruption] It is not unknown in the world.

Mr. Lee: Standing Order 48(1) and (6).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. “Again, ah throw meh corn, ah didn’t call no fowl. Is de same ting happen recently”, the Minister of National Security spoke about criminal links with politicians. [Interruption]

[Mr. Lee and Mr. Charles stand]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, please, I am on my legs. I am on my legs.
Laventille West, please, move on.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** But, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I have ruled. Naparima, Couva South, I have ruled.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, in fairness to the Member for Laventille West and my constituents, the Member for Oropouche East, when he was making his submissions was allowed to and he put on record that they—they, meaning “the Government”, want to put handcuffs on people if they just see criminals talking to politicians. He said so, and I want the country to know nobody is doing that. When the police find information that you are dwelling with criminals for political purposes, “then is when de police does get involved”. I want the Member for Oropouche East to understand that. [Crosstalk] Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the issues—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Members, Members, please.

**Mr. Charles:** You went to school boy?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** One of the issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the measures in front of us are designed to check and to deal with is the business of money laundering. We have had some examples of the possibility of money laundering. I had the opportunity and I went into casinos three times in my life. When this matter came up in a previous government and was preparing to speak on these measures, more than four years ago, I visited the very Princess Casino on Independence Square. I visited one in Grand Bazaar, and I went to one on Ariapita Avenue to address some workers, a point that I understand the Member for Oropouche East made reference to. I went to speak to the workers there, to find out what were their concerns so that I could have made a useful contribution to this debate.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would find out that the machines—one man, a foreigner, who was tasked for years repairing these machines in Trinidad, he told me—and if I am not speaking the truth I speak after him—that these machines are sometimes fixed and set, and the owners determine in most cases what the machine would pay out and when. They could put the machine on a 50-50 balance, meaning, the owner benefits 50 per cent and the customers benefit 50 per cent. They could do 70-30 or 60-40. These machines are all set. In a regulated environment, a lot of that may not ensue.

So the measures here today are designed not only to protect the hardworking people who seek jobs in that industry quite naturally, but also the customers, because the whole thing is fraught with racket. And the example given by the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West of a man who went in and lost everything. When I went into the Grand Bazaar casino and they saw my face, they know I am not a regular, many of them came to me to ask me what was happening, and I told them why I was there. One woman told me she was a cashier, up to that time, in a well-known supermarket in Port of Spain, but she told me she had her two daughters and she was a single mother. She said, “Mr. Hinds, this ting so bad, as soon as I get my salary, I must go to the casino. I actually hear it calling meh name. Is like ah jumbie.”

Another man told me when he have money in his pocket, from the time he see de flashing lights, he have to go in. I met at the Princess Casino, God is my witness, a man who tells me he never gambles, his wife does, she is addicted, and he has to be there with her, because when she loses whatever she went with, she is prone to asking strangers and would find herself the victim of abuse. It is those things that convinced me, as the Member of Parliament for Laventille West, that we must
regulate this industry, and we must put systems in place to protect the vulnerable like those people. And the Member for Oropouche East would never understand that.

The *Trinidad Guardian* published an article, permit me, dated Sunday July 7th in 2013, under the rubric:

“Liquid cash luring casino owners to T&T

The article begins by saying:

“A large amount of liquid cash floating in the economy is luring businessmen from Eastern Europe to set up private members’ clubs in T&T. Many believe poor enforcement of regulatory controls within the gaming industry has caused the Eastern European casino chain to spread its operations”—to TrinidadandTobago.

“…attorney David West said the Gambling and Betting Act 22 (1963) is outdated and the Proceeds of Crime Act (2009) has never been used to charge anyone accused of suspicious financial transactions in private members’ clubs.”

And they make reference to the Trinidad Princess Club of which I just spoke. The article says:

“…Trinidad Club Princess, has been open on Independence Square, Port-of-Spain, since 2006. Club Princess was named in a lawsuit against attorney Christlyn Moore before she became Justice Minister.”

The article goes on:

She—“was…corporate secretary for two companies”—and the companies were sued—“Moore and two Turkish businessmen, Sudi Ozkhan and Zafer Hakan Unal were accused of oppressive and unlawful conduct towards
American businessman Thomas Baker.”

But when they checked they found that:

“There was no listing of Forty Four Ltd or Alnando Corporation in T&T’s registered list of private clubs,…”

And David West is opining in this article that they should be regulated.

The article continues:

“Subhas Ramkhelawon, the founder and managing director of stockbroking firm Bourse Securities Ltd, also said regulations must be expanded to meet the sophisticated operations of the gaming industry.”

He is quoted as saying:

““The FIU legislation is sufficient to provide proper oversight for money laundering and counter-terrorism. However, we don’t want casino operations to infect ordinary citizens. We want enforcement, preventative action and proper regulatory controls.””

He said enforcement was important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Securities and Exchange Commission is a commission that has been established under the laws of Trinidad and Tobago to regulate the trading of stocks and shares, securities, and it does a pretty good job. But of course not to perfection, because recently—since I mentioned “Bourse”—Bourse stockbroking firm had its name called in an issue that began as far back as in 2013. Now there is some similarity between the gambling industry and the gambling or taking chances on the stock exchange as people do. But of course the Securities and Exchange Commission is a regulatory commission and we are only now proposing to establish a gambling commission to deal with the problems in the gambling industry, but a problem arose.
The FCB offered, and I am just giving the example, an initial offer, an IPO. It turns out from the facts in front of us—

**Mr. Lee:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1), irrelevance of the FCB shares and this debate.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Overruled.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is interesting that the UNC has said— and they do not want to hear anything about that. [Crosstalk] They do not want to hear anything about that. The point I am making, it turns out about 684,000 shares were purchased by an employee of the FCB, sold within the next four months, a profit of $12 million—

**Mr. Lee:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1), please.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Overruled.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the bottom line, and the reason why I raised this just going forward, is that, arising out of that, it is reasonable for the members of the public, the very little people that they claimed to be speaking to, to believe in this country that there is a law for some and another law for others. I am not surprised that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre “doh” want to hear this, you know, because a Motion was filed in this Parliament to deal with that issue, and it was shut down by the UNC.

**Mr. Charles:** 48(6). Specifically—

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Yes, so let me press on—

**Mr. Charles:** Standing Order 48(6), imputing improper motives to my colleague from Pointe-a-Pierre, who is an honourable and decent man.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Proceed.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to take
the opportunity to compliment the Government of TrinidadandTobago for taking the bold step, however belatedly, based on the tarrying and the delay of the UNC to put measures in place to regulate this place. [Desk thumping] I want to specially congratulate the members of the Joint Select Committee who worked hard. I am satisfied that they did a tremendous amount of work, against all the UNC odds, to be able to bring this legislation to where we are here today. As I said I am not surprised at anything they do, I am convinced that the UNC does not like law and order.

Hon. Member: “Dey like wetting though.”

Hon. F. Hinds: I remember back in about 2004, I was at that time representing the constituency of Laventille East/Morvant, and one Saturday morning I noticed a building was under refurbishment and a casino sign went up at the corner of 6th Avenue in Malick, Barataria and the Eastern Main Road. I was shocked. I immediately contacted my leader, the Prime Minister at the time, Mr. Patrick Manning, and I told him of my dissatisfaction, because shortly before that, four persons from east Port of Spain were charged with committing robberies in a casino or two on Ariapita Avenue. I had known about it because I was one of the lawyers in the matter. I just imagined when I saw that inside of Laventille, inside of my constituency, the trouble that the presence of that place could generate, because it is not too difficult for one worker in there to use a cell phone and to tell somebody just outside the door, “De fella in de red shirt or de fella in the blue shirt is coming downstairs with $60,000.” Not too difficult, and that could result in trouble, murder, so I took objection to it.

Of course, the Prime Minister agreed, and action was taken and that establishment— the corporation got involved and action was taken to ensure that it
did not happen. Today it now houses a grocery that benefits the people in the community without the social ills that a casino would have brought.

The measures before us today regulates these things where they could be, because they would now have to apply to the commission. Back in that time, they had to ask nobody nothing. They just had to acquire the building, either buy it or lease it and put up your casino. The measures that we have in front of you here today would allow a regulatory commission to decide if it should go there. In some countries, whether it is Atlantic City, whether it is Las Vegas and other parts of the world—there is no casino in Hong Kong, I understand. They are all Macao. What some countries do is to put them in remote, if you like, or separate areas. So if you want to gamble, you travel and you go, it is not so accessible as if it is next door to your home.

When I went into the Princess Casino, one of the things that struck me, and that was around eleven o’clock in the morning I distinctly recall, the place was packed with people, of which about 80 per cent were women. I asked myself, these women, these mothers, where are their children, who is taking care of them? Many of them stuck in the casino. One woman tells me she could be there for hours and hours, because one of the tricks they have, apart from fixing the machines as I explained earlier, is that when you win, some of prizes you win is not in cash, but it is in other chits and tickets or whatever it takes, to gamble again. So part of your winnings include coupons, so you are stuck in the place.

They have some games that play every hour on the hour, so you have to stay. They give you free food, and they give you drinks, and they have security so it is a reasonably safe environment, and people spend a lot of time in there, and all of their money. Some of the victims of that gambling industry told me they wished
we, the Government at the time, could shut it down. Well, of course, that is not the option we are talking, we want to regulate it.

I am very proud to see, I think it is in clause—Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me just check this—clause 64, yes, where we establish the rehabilitation fund and the development fund, where these moneys, as happens in many developed countries, by the billions—we were told that this generates about how much?—about 16 billion a year. If that is the official estimate, it could very well be more, far more.

6.40 p.m.

These funds would be established and this is what this is all about. And who is that designed to protect, the owners? The Member for Oropouche East is concerned about the owners for reasons he would know best, but these measures are designed by the Government to protect the ordinary man, and where he needs rehabilitation from the addiction of which I spoke, and the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West spoke, then the rehabilitation fund is designed to meet people like him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member—

Hon. F. Hinds: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker:—your initial speaking time has elapsed, you have an additional 15 minutes. You care to avail yourself?

Hon. F. Hinds: Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Proceed.

Hon. F. Hinds:—and I thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I am very, very pleased with the measures that are in front of us. It allows the Government to monitor the industry in a serious way and, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that way the Government will be able to retrieve much needed taxes to bring satisfaction
and relief and meet the needs and expectations of the people of Trinidad and Tobago because it is with taxes, money collected in taxes, that the Government would use to pave roads, give subventions to WASA to provide water for the people, subsidize energy, gas. The $22 tank, 20-pound tank cylinder of gas that the average person uses in their home, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the real cost of that is about $65 to $68. The Government pays the difference. We need taxes to do that; the school feeding programme, the books, the transport, medicine in the hospital. So when we regulate this industry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it allows the Government a hand and a handle on what is now wild and unregulated. And these casinos dealing with this large amount of cash, hear what happens, as the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West alluded to a while ago. They are able to create a serious black market for US currency because they offer $12, $10 and $8 and $12 for one. So they gather—this informant inside of there told me he has seen as much as $1 million in US singles in his employer’s place. So they gather our US money, and they take it away because most, if not all of them, are not citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, but eastern Europeans—

Hon. Member: Western Union.

Hon. F. Hinds:—and others, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so it has a drain on our foreign exchange. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very, very, very satisfied in my intellect, in my mind, that what we have in front of us here today, is of value to Trinidad and Tobago, it is of value to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, it is a value to the workers of Trinidad and Tobago, it is to all of our benefit, including the vulnerable among us.

So when the Member for Oropouche East made reference to my constituents, I want to see my constituents earning at the top of the food chain. I want to see them
excel in academics or acquire the best skills in the modern economies of the world and be able to compete with the best, but I know as a fact that many of them who find jobs in the casino industry, it is probably because they could find no other. They have to spend long hours, 12, 14 hours to make the little overtime, in smoke-filled rooms, men with no love in their hearts making nasty passes at them. I know a couple of them, when they finish work four and five o’clock in the morning, they have to sit down on the Promenade and wait until the sun comes up before they could get a taxi to go to the little places, districts, that they live in. So I know the burdens, and many of them have come to me trying to find an improved circumstance, so we know that these measures will benefit them. So, I do not want the Member for Oropouche East to be telling me about my constituents. I love them, I look out for them and I want the best for them. [Desk thumping]

And when I went to the Ma Pau casino it was to speak with them to find out what their circumstances were, and I did, and today I am a wiser man for having spoken to them. As a result I can stand here on behalf of them and the larger people of Laventille West and to say I give full support on their behalf to these measures, [Desk thumping] and reject the bad behaviour of the UNC, the unprincipled behaviour of the UNC; sit down in a joint select committee, as I said before, as I close, for four years, pretend to support everything and just take the committee on for a ride, and no minority report, came here today and spoke an untruth about a minority report, that is the typical behaviour of the UNC.

And I close by saying, again, I will not, but I am very tempted, if I have to judge their supporters by their behaviour, I will think little of them, but I will not do that because there is one among them, the Member for Tabaquite, I recall him, time and time again, speaking loudly, probably this is why he is now being extricated from
the team, saying that this industry should be regularized \textit{[Desk thumping]} to protect the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but the UNC does not want to hear that. As a result, he is being purged, he is being pushed aside.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those things said, I concur with the views as expressed by the Minister of Finance who piloted this Bill, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, and I wholeheartedly on behalf of the people of Laventille West, support these measures. I thank you. \textit{[Desk thumping]}

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Prime Minister. \textit{[Desk thumping]}

**The Prime Minister and Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was kind of expecting that at this time that we would have gone to the vote, because this matter does not go to committee, so I do not know what enthusiasm exists for a vote at this time, but I join just to place on the record my support for a piece of legislation that has been long in coming in this country, and has been worked upon by the Parliament for many a year.

And I am little disappointed that there is not more enthusiasm for the passage of this legislation. I know that there is politics to be, I do not want to say “played”, but politics to be noticed, but this is the work of all of us, it is the work of a joint select committee.

There was a time early in the term of this Government where every piece of legislation we brought into the House to advance the administration of the country and to protect the interest of the population, whatever that might be, the general call from Opposition Members in response to any piece of legislation was, “Send it to committee”. The impression was being given that that was the way to get consensus, that was the way to get the best of the Parliament. And as they
themselves said on many occasions when we advanced legislation without going to committee, they said, “We want to go to committee because we want to pass good law”. “It is not that we are obstructionists, it is not that we are unpatriotic, no, it is none of those things, it is just that we want to pass the law, but we want to pass good law, send it to committee.” That was the position of our colleagues on the other side, and on many occasions, not all occasions, we did send legislation to committee, this being one of them.

And I do not care what my colleague from Couva South says, I came here fully apprised and well-fortified to say and to think and to accept that this piece of legislation had its origin in the previous Government, and the desire for legislating and regulating the conduct of gaming and gambling in our country has its origin long, long, long time ago.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a lot of friends in religious communities, believe it or not, and many of those religious leaders are opposed to gambling. And for very many years the State turned a blind eye to the existence of casino gambling in our society, because in response to this point of view that gambling is a bad thing and casinos are bad things, we allowed an industry to develop in the country as if it was not here.

We did the same thing with Play Whe, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker. People used to “buss they mark” under trees and under bridges and so, and millions of dollars were involved. I was a parliamentarian, I came into this Parliament in 1987, and I was being told by people in the gambling business how much money was involved in Whe Whe, and I could not believe the numbers they were telling me, because I thought it was a few million dollars that people at the base in society were entertaining themselves and making a little money in so doing, but they were
telling me that Whe Whe was real big money and those who controlled Whe Whe were handling big money in this country.

And I only came face to face with that and realized that it was true when the State got involved and created Play Whe, and I was in the Parliament when NLCB Play Whe generated a $1 billion in revenue to the State. And I had to ask myself, before the State got involved in Play Whe, and Whe Whe was not acknowledged as an acceptable form of activity requiring the State’s attention, look how much money was available in the society for Whe Whe.

And now even though Play Whe is a standard activity in the country for decades now, I think, Whe Whe and Play Whe are still going on, because Whe Whe is still going on using the Play Whe draw and giving better odds, and hundreds of millions of dollars are still out there.

**Hon. Member:** If not billions.

[MADAM SPEAKER in the Chair]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** So, Madam Speaker, the point I want to make is this. Even though some people in our society are resolutely opposed to gambling as an activity, and there are those who are resolutely opposed to the existence of casinos as a place to have gaming transactions, the majority of people in this country that we agree to be governed by the point of view of the majority, acknowledging the concerns of the minority, the majority of the people in this country have no real problem with gaming and gambling, and have no real problem with it being identified as an area of activity requiring the State’s involvement, namely regulation and taxation, and therefore, we want to say to those who have a problem with casinos, that it is better to have regulated gaming and gambling in our country so that we could screen out a lot, if not all, but a lot of the deleterious outcomes of
gaming and gambling. We as a society, we are far better off having the State passing legislation, creating dos and don’ts and enforcing the laws that we pass to ensure that we minimize any negatives that may be associated with gaming and gambling especially on the scale at which it is going on in Trinidad and Tobago. For quite a while we had very few casinos. When the Government by some kind of subterfuge decided to tax casinos that were not supposed to exist, I was in this Parliament when in a budget—I never knew what a Sip Sam machine was. I am in the Parliament, I do not know what Sip Sam is. I understand that we are taxing Sip Sam, and I had to ask, “What is Sip Sam”?

**Hon. Member:** It is in the fifth Schedule to this Bill.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** And then discovered that we were taxing that element of gaming and gambling, while not legislating and regulating the thing. Of course, that is the worst possible way to try and collect taxes, but what we did then by that kind of vicarious activity is create an acceptance of the business in the country that did not go unnoticed by those who were implying to invest in the business, and overnight as we pretended to collect taxes from those people, Sip Sam, and “Sam Sip” and whatever else, overnight there was a mushrooming of casinos in Trinidad and Tobago. And all of a sudden, those who were gambling in the shadows had neon lights, all over the country, casinos. And those of us who are parliamentarians, we had a duty and we still have a duty to ensure that they do not have casino signs around the country without any regulation. *[Desk thumping]* That is what we are doing here, that is why we are here. We are not here, as my friend from Couva South tried to say this morning, to try and take away people’s jobs—

**Hon. Member:** Nonsense.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:**—or here to give the Minister power to be ministerial and
abuse power. No. No. No. In simple straight-forward English. In the absence of the State discharging its responsibility to the society, we are here to assume that responsibility, the responsibility to pass legislation to determine that nobody goes with a gambling institution outside of a school door, next door to the church, on a corner interfering with traffic, or worse, operating it in such a way that it damages the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. It is bad enough to turn a blind eye to it if it was not doing that, but unregulated gambling has the potential to pose a threat to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago in many ways. And we are not the first or the only people doing this. Those of us on the other side, our joint select committee has reported to us, and it has reported in a way that we should all be pound that the Joint Select Committee went through all the avenues. I was hearing today that we had to have experts because we did not know anything about gambling, but we have come a long way from that. We cannot pretend to know that we know that there is gambling taking place in this country in a multi-billion dollar way. Not multimillion, you know, multibillion dollar way, and those who want to put their heads in the sand could keep it there. We want to assist you to see whether you are in the church, in the mosque, in the mandir or in the ground, wherever you are, we are saying to you in Trinidad and Tobago today, there is a billion-dollar industry that is unregulated and that is dangerous.

All I could tell you, Madam Speaker, there is something called the International Association of Gaming Regulators. The International Association of Gaming Regulators, I want to repeat that. There is an International Association of Gaming Regulators, and let me give you, let me just run down the list of various types of countries in which gambling and gaming are allowed, but they have in place, done what we are trying to do here, so it is quite disingenuous for any of our colleagues
or whoever, to say we are trying to do something that is revolutionary, unnecessary, unwarranted. We are simply catching up as latecomers, catching up as latecomers, and if you do not believe me, I was very embarrassed when I read the newspaper in Trinidad and Tobago and saw that the American authorities had taken action against an American citizen who was operating a casino in Trinidad and had run afoul of American law by not declaring his earnings in Trinidad, and I presume it was American money in US dollars in America that he brought into America and did not declare its source in Trinidad.

So here it was Trinidad gambling in Trinidad and Tobago dollars found its way into a US banking system. The owner of that money was prosecuted in America, and we the people in Trinidad and Tobago, oblivious to all of this and like we do not give a damn, and that is why we are here. [Desk thumping] And I am not talking about a few dollars. I am talking one casino, one person in that instance, and I think it was about millions of dollars.

Mr. Al-Rawi: US$1.5 million.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: US$1.5 million. How much is that in TT dollars?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Take it at 10.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: TT $10 million. One of the many casinos, one was placed in a $10 million issue in America where the foreign government, living in Trinidad and collecting money here, but ran afoul of a place where there was law.

Madam Speaker, in Australia there are number of gaming commissions. In Antigua and Barbuda we have the Financial Services Regulatory Commission. In Australia at the federal level of Australia we have the Australian Communications and Media Authority. Then at the capital level we have the Australia Capital Territory Gambling and Racing Commission. In New South Wales we have the
Liquor and Gaming Commission of New South Wales. In Queensland you have the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation. In Victoria you have the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation. In Western Australia we have the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, all of these in one country, but it is a federal system, and you the States from the western state Victoria, whatever, and they all see it fit to have regulation and gaming commissions to regulate this industry and to protect themselves from any of the bad side of this thing.

In Bermuda, you have the Bermuda Casino Gaming Commission; in Brazil it is done by the Ministry of Finance; in Canada you have in Manitoba, you have the Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority of Manitoba; in Ontario, Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario; in Denmark, they have the Danish Gambling Authority; in Finland, we have the National Police Board of Finland Gambling Administration; in Gibraltar, we have the Gambling Division of the Government of Gibraltar; in Great Britain, we have simply the Gambling Commission; in the Isle of Man we have the Isle of Man Gambling Supervision Commission; in Jersey island in the Channels, you have the Jersey Gambling Commission; in Malta, we have the Malta Gaming Authority; in the Netherlands, we have the Netherlands Gaming Authority; in Norway, we have the Norwegian Gaming and Foundation Authority; in Seychelles, you have the Financial Services Authority; in Singapore, we have the Casino Regulatory Authority of Singapore; in South Africa, at the national level, we have the National Lotteries Commission.

On the Eastern Cape, we have the Eastern Cape Gambling and Betting Board; in South Africa, we have Mpumalanga Gambling Board; in South Africa in the Western Cape, you have the Western Cape Gambling and Racing Board. All of
those last four I mentioned in one country in South Africa. In Swaziland, you have the Swaziland Gaming Board of Control; in Sweden, you have the Swedish Gambling Authority; in Switzerland, Swiss Federal Gaming Board; in Turkey, we have the Ministry of Finance Gaming Board. In America, you have a lot of them: California, the California Gambling Control Commission; Colorado, Colorado Department of Revenue - Division of Gaming; in Delaware, the Delaware Division of Gaming Enforcement; the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, you have a Gaming Commission; the United States in New Jersey, the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement.

I gave you that spectrum, Madam Speaker, so you could understand that it is people with all different kinds of societies, from Turkey to Bermuda, from very liberal to very conservative, European, African, Caribbean, North America, south—all over the world there is gambling, and all over the world gambling activity is regulated by the government. [Desk thumping] And that is why we are playing catch-up here. This is no time for jokes and playing games, we are late. So asking to delay it further on spurious grounds is irresponsible and disingenuous. [Desk thumping]

For those people who are religious, I simply want to point out to them that being religious we understand your position and your belief, your doctrine, but all over in that plethora of countries I just called, there are people who are religious and there are people who are not, and they are all better off by having the State regulating gambling within all these countries, and Trinidad and Tobago [Desk thumping] is about to join that now. Nobody could make a serious case that we are better off having every Tom, Dick and Harry open a casino, conduct casino business—

Hon. Member: Billions of dollars.
Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:—interfere with our financial system, pauperize people, encourage criminality, launder money, account—it was so bad here in Trinidad and Tobago, I do not know if you all remember this, that the banking system in Trinidad and Tobago took a position not to offer its services to casino operations. And you know why? It was not that they were not customers, you know. They were customers in the bank, and because of the propensity and exposure to criminal conduct and criminal liabilities that will fall on the banking system, casinos were de-banked, they were given short notice and asked to remove their moneys from the bank. Are you all aware of that? And if you are aware of it, have you spent a moment asking where is that money going? And what is that money doing? If these millions that we were told about today cannot properly enter the bank to be recorded and to be accounted for, where is it? Where is it and is what is it doing in the criminality of money laundering? [Desk thumping]

And if you care about anything, do not come here and trump up any argument about “workers losing their jobs”. Be concerned about workers really losing their jobs, because if you import something into this country and you are paying $10 for it and you are making a $1 selling it for $11, somebody who is handling casino money, paying no taxes, accounting to no one, could import the same thing and sell it for $8 and you lose your work and lose your business, that is what money laundering does, that is what money laundering does.

And I want to say to my colleagues, when we won our seats and came into this Parliament, every one of us came to this table and said something, took an oath of office, [Desk thumping] right there we took an oath of office to act without fear or favour, without malice or ill-will in the protection of the interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

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And today, you have a duty to observe that oath or stand up here and make a case in defence of us continuing in this country without regulation of the gambling industry. It is not sufficient to abstain, to abstain is to be complicit and presenting a danger. Our joint select committee has reported here, our joint select committee has reported and your vote is required in support of our committee’s work. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, we hear a lot from our colleagues about crime and criminality, and one gets the impression that because of the effect that murders have on all of us, that our colleagues only see crime as murder. Murder is probably the most heinous of crimes, but there is a whole plethora of other crimes that we ought to be concerned about as well, and one of them is money laundering and the other is tax evasion. [Desk thumping] You could not be asking, you could not really be asking for the owners of those profits, like the one who took it to America and ended up in jail, the owners of those profits should be allowed to continue unimpeded, unhindered, but you want police to pass down the street and secure them when the night comes. Who is to pay for the police? You want them to stay there with workers who cannot organize themselves.

My colleagues from Oropouche East and Couva South love to play union men inside here. Which of those casino workers, those females who are exploited, which of them do they encourage to organize themselves in the trade union?—not one of them, so they will raise their children from toddler to adulthood working on minimum wage, abused in casinos in this country, eh?—and threatened if they come out and if they only do so—so you could bring them to Parliament in large numbers and say, “You are coming to fight the PNM”. It is the PNM who will pass this law with your support and protect this country from that kind of
exploitation. \[Desk thumping\]

7.10 p.m.

And I want to say this without fear of contradiction because I speak here with two hats on. I am head of the Government and I am head of the political party called the People's National Movement, and nowhere, Madam Speaker, is there any casino making any promises, holding out any benefit to the PNM not to pass this law. \[Desk thumping\] Because we stand on the oath we took in here to act without fear, without favour, without malice, and without ill-will, and once we do that, we would have acted in the interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. \[Desk thumping\]

Madam Speaker, this International Association of Gaming Regulators highlights for us the components of this industry and the powers that regulators should have in dealing with the industry. What does the regulation and the regulatory authority handle? They are taught to handle compliance and auditing of gambling operators. It is the main thing. Compliance means, make sure they following the law and audit gambling operators to make sure that whatever moneys go in there is accounted for under the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. Tax avoidance is illegal, “ent”?

Hon. Member: Avoidance, yes.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Tax evasion is illegal?

Hon. Member: It is illegal.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Right, so tax evasion, that is what compliance and auditing allows you to minimize, if not, eliminate tax evasion. Licencing, meaning you determine who is authorized as a fit and proper person. Persons with criminal conduct and criminal intent known to the State ought not to have a licence to run a
casino. You must be fit and proper, meaning that there ought to be some modicum of moral underpinning and an absence of criminal conduct in your record if you want to run a casino—licencing. And secondly, the location of the institution and establishment must be important. That is where you determine—you do not build them next to churches and schools and other places of offence, and you license them, they meet certain standard set by the country through its Parliament, otherwise do not get a licence.

Issuing of fines, meaning enforcement. You would have heard when I read how some countries named their commissions. Some of them are called enforcement agencies, gambling and enforcement. There is no point in making laws if you are not going to enforce them, and who should know that more than the people of Trinidad and Tobago. So you make the laws and then you enforce it. That is not oppression, that is protection. [Desk thumping] And then you provide oversight and supervision and market analysis. Good business. Oversight for the business, and analyse the market as you go ahead. Prosecution of breaches of gambling legislation, enforcement, policy development. This law may not be perfect like most laws are. If after we pass this law, colleagues, there is need to come back and amend it, we would do that too. If something happens that requires the policy to be tweaked by a government in Trinidad and Tobago, you tweak the policy and you come back, because we are always amending laws. So do not come and tell me you are not going and vote for it because it is not perfect. You are not perfect, I am not perfect, very few things are perfect. Perfection is God himself. [Desk thumping]

We pass laws, do the best that we can, having taken four years to come to this point. Who are we? Who are we? Twenty years and we cannot get a gallon of gas
out of Loran-Manatee. We come here today to say we are now about to get it, my colleagues upset. Leader of the other side—

**Hon. Member:** “She gone. She gone home.”

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:**—throwing words at me. But I can tell you, I lead this team and I fear no consequence.  

[Desk thumping]  As long as I stand for the people of Trinidad and Tobago in this place as a job that I have been selected to do I fear no consequence, I sleep without fear. [Desk thumping]  Preparation of legislation, I want to congratulate the Attorney General, the Minister of Finance and the entire JSC.  

[Desk thumping]  They have done that. This country has prepared the legislation, let us pass it. We are going out for evaluation. A few weeks ago we had here in Trinidad and Tobago our global—

**Hon. Member:** Financial Action Task Force.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** FATF visitors here to assess us to determine whether we can be elevated from where we are in the darkness, to come out of it and stand proudly amongst the countries in the world who are serious about managing their affairs in today’s world. Would we be able to come out or would we be stopped? Because one of the things that we have failed to do is to pass appropriate legislation to govern the casino business in our country. Is that what you want? You want us to fail the FATF examination on the grounds that we failed to pass this?

And there is another point I want to make right here. My colleagues keep talking about election and election and election, and “we doing” things before election, and in your last few days. Let me just say something to you all. A term in office in Trinidad and Tobago is five years, and you should know that more than anybody else. Because the five years and then you have to call an election within 90 days.

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Okay? So when we are doing the people's business in the first year, the second year, the third year, the fourth year or the fifth year, that is what we have been elected to do. [Desk thumping] So stop wasting your time, and trying to talk about how close we are to the next election, because we are all bound by the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. We cannot stay here one day beyond what the law allows, because we do not intend to seize power in this country. We are authorized to be here for a fixed period, and during that period, every day is as important as the first day we came into office. [Desk thumping]. But to get back to what the gaming commissions do, they collect taxes, duties and similar levies. Is that what is driving this recalcitrance on the other side?

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Diego Martin West, your original 30 minutes is now spent, you are entitled to 15 more minutes to wind up.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, with the permission of my colleagues, I would like to have all of it. [Desk thumping] One of the requirements, one of the duties that what comes into play when we have a regulation and a regulatory agency is the collection of taxes and duties.

Madam Speaker, one of the things this country is coming face to face with, as a result of the demonetization that this Government undertook in this country recently, is the extent to which we ought to be considered about tax evasion. And we did a study earlier on by experts from UWI, who told us—Independent experts—that 40 per cent of the collectable taxes in Trinidad and Tobago is not collected because of the poor approach in collecting taxes, and largely, the failure of tax collection as an activity, a governmental activity in Trinidad and Tobago. So I am not surprised that there are people who do not want this, because they want to preserve a situation where collection of taxes and duties remain the same.
Parliamentary colleagues, we are not part of that group. We cannot be part of that. We cannot be part of saying we do not want this because it will improve collection of taxes. Education, many people in this country have no idea about the details of the gambling industry in our country, because it is there as if it is not there. Education, that will be a function of the agency. Let the population understand what it means, how it operates, its benefits, its opportunities and its dangers, and then of course, research. This billion-dollar industry in this country, research is an integral part of the responsibility of the agency. Policing, a certain amount of self-policing is required in the industry, you know, for their own protection. Because if something goes wrong—and whatever that might be—and it causes the industry to be viewed in a negative light, it could be damaging to the industry, so you need to protect your investment if you are an authorized investor in the gaming industry. The matter of setting of taxation rates. The Government wants to tax at a certain level, you need to talk to somebody. You do not talk to the workers and send them in here, force them to come in here and then give the impression that the Government is afraid of their vote on election day. No. There should be a body that you can sit down with and talk reasonably as to what is reasonable taxation, what is good for them and good for the country, and therefore, you have a real industry with a future. And, of course, treating of gambling addicts. We do not have any business in this country that treats with people who smoke and get themselves sick through tobacco products. I do not know if we have any industry—any arrangement to deal with people, except in the NGO sector, people who are ruining or who have ruined their lives through drinking alcohol, but in this, one of the roles of the regulator is treating with the addiction that could be associated with some people who get involved in gaming. And that particular
aspect is the one that caused many of the religious leaders to say they do not want it in the country.

But, we cannot be afraid of a pin because it might prick your finger. We cannot be afraid of a needle because one might get lost in the carpet. There is so much more that needles do. There is so much more that pins do, and therefore, we can regulate this industry, preserve the jobs, improve the jobs, because the terms and conditions must improve, terms and conditions of casino workers must improve, because I guarantee you that the day this law is passed, they will organize themselves and get the benefit of the Industrial Relations Act. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Member: Bring it into the light.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: And what does it do? What does all this do? You get consumer protection. Protection of the consumer. Fellas fixing one-armed bandits so it only pays out 1 per cent.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Nobody checking.

Hon. D. K. Rowley: Who is checking that? Some independent authority has to protect you from that. So there is protection for the consumer. Problem gambling, if you are a person who is gambling as a problem gambler, it is in the interest of the casino to identify you, and you could get help.

Regulation of gambling product marketing. What are the products that we allow in the gambling business in this country? “Is ah” free-for-all? A free-for-all or we regulate the products that are allowed to be in the mix? And therefore, if there is something that is particularly damaging or we do not want it at all, we can keep it out, and what we can accept, we put in and licence. Regulation of that. And, of course, the big demon, money laundering, and then other crimes related to gambling, and of course there is the corporate social responsibility, match fixing
and sports integrity. These are all subject matters which this commission and this
country working together.
In 97 per cent of the jurisdictions where there is established legal regulations,
acknowledgement of their existence and regulation and tax collection, they have
lotteries; 97 per cent of the world's jurisdiction where gambling takes place allows
lotteries; 94 per cent allows bingo as a gambling item; 91 per cent allows casinos;
85 per cent allows slot machines; 82 per cent allows betting in other forms; and
then only 29 per cent allows casino games outside of casinos. The research of the
International Association of Gaming Regulators. And all of these things are
covered in our law, giving us the ability to act responsibly in these areas of
concern. Why is that wrong? Why are you not supporting that? Colleagues, why
are you not supporting that? In the betting markets that do not have restrictions in
place for foreign investment, 59 per cent of jurisdictions do not have restrictions in
place for foreign investment. We will have some element of restriction for our
investment. Right now, in the current climate, is it true to say that only foreign—
mainly foreigners?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Hon. D. K. Rowley:** Mainly foreigners—

**Mr. Imbert:** Dominate.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Vastly dominate.

**Hon. D. K. Rowley:** Mainly foreigners benefit from this industry without
Government oversight and control. Colleagues, this is madness. They have to
export their profits. Our dollar is not recoverable outside of Trinidad and Tobago
to bring it back here. You cannot use Trinidad and Tobago dollars outside. What
are they taking outside? They are taking our foreign exchange outside to repatriate
their profits. And while they are doing that unbeknownst to, and not controlled by any state agency, not even the police. Colleagues, why are you not supporting this?

I heard the case being made by a couple of my colleagues today as though there is some problem with this law. If what they have made is the case that they have made against supporting it, are you telling me that what I am saying now is less important to you than what you said here all afternoon or is this just a plain—another instance of dereliction of duty? The President came in this House and said she signed off on 40-odd pieces of legislation, none of which, according to her, none of which, she said people told her, benefited the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I could tell you one thing, when we pass this law colleagues, if you wake up out of your slumber and pass this law with us, nobody could say that this is not for the benefit and protection of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] Nobody could say that, because this is late in coming, long in coming, but better late than never. Some restrictions on foreign exchange, foreign handling in our environment. And, of course, gambling comes in a variety of forms. Around the world, with 80 per cent of the jurisdiction, there is a state of public gaming. In 70 per cent, there is private involvement in gaming, and 42 per cent gaming for charity. We covered all those bases. We covered all those bases. Our Committee did the work and covered all those bases.

Let me just end, Madam Speaker, by drawing to the attention of my colleagues who may not have come here today to support this legislation, what we are facing. If we do nothing, the activity out there will continue as it is going. It would mushroom further and pose a bigger threat to all of us for precious little benefit. I know they will tell you they get some employment for some ladies out there. That
is a joke to what the industry really is. Giving us crumbs while threatening our piggy bank. It is not a good enough balance. And the industry is exposed to money laundering, illegal gambling, cheating, fraud and gambling addicts and stealing, and those are not my summaries, those are the summaries of the International Association of Gaming Regulators, and you all know that. And you are all are asking us to leave it the way it is so that money laundering, illegal gambling, cheating, fraud, and gambling addiction and stealing is the order of the day.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Why?

Hon. D. K. Rowley: My UNC colleagues, I want to ask you all today, let this not be your epitaph. Madam Speaker, I thank you. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 15(5), I beg to move that the House continue to sit until the conclusion of the matter before it.

Question put and agreed to.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT

Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill, 2016

(Adoption)

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker—

Hon. Member: I beg to move.

Hon. C. Imbert: Be quiet, please. [Laughs] [ Interruption] I will ask for
protection, you know. Madam Speaker, I just want to put on the record some facts, because we heard from the Member for Couva South, and we heard from the Member for Oropouche East. I do not recall the Member for Oropouche East as being a member of the committee. I do remember the Member for Couva South for being a member of the committee. I want to put some facts on the record, and these facts need to be repeated. I have in many possession Cabinet Minute No. 733 of March 26, 2015, and what is relevant about this Cabinet Minute, the first thing that is relevant is that it was approved under the Government of UNC under the former Prime Minister, the hon. Member for Siparia. So that is the first point. March 26, 2015, six months before the general election of September 2015. And what is the second relevant point about this, it contradicts the contribution of the Member for Oropouche East, because Cabinet agreed—the Cabinet of the UNC—to approve a number of things. But the most important things, in contradiction to what the Member for Oropouche East said, is Cabinet— the UNC Cabinet—approved the Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control (Application for Gaming Licenses) Regulations, 2015; the Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control (Accounting and Internal Control) Regulations, 2015; the Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control (Anti-money laundering) (Casino) Regulations, 2015; the Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control (Gaming Devices and Equipment) Regulations, 2015; the Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Regulations, 2015. All of these regulations were prepared by the UNC Government. Every single one of them. Regulations dealing with licences, accounting, money laundering, gaming devices, et cetera. And the regulations that we circulated in 2017, the regulations which they pretend do not exist—it is amazing to come into this Parliament and hear a member of the
committee pretend, after serving on a committee for three years, after having been part of this UNC Government in 2015, coming in this Parliament and pretend that these regulations were not drafted by the UNC, and all we did, all the PNM committee did, under the PNM Government, the parliamentary committee that is, was to recirculate the regulations drafted by the UNC Government. It is shameful, Madam Speaker, for a Member to come and pretend that he has no knowledge of regulations, and where are the regulations, and we need to look at the regulations before we could even contemplate looking at the legislation, when the regulations are theirs. And all of the regulations that the Member for Oropouche East was nitpicking over, this piece, “he doh like that word, he doh like this.” Those are his regulations. It is political hypocrisy of the highest. [Desk thumping] Political hypocrisy.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, it needs re-emphasizing that it is absolutely impossible for there to be a minority report to this report that is dated June or July 2019. That is physically impossible, because this report that is before the House that is the subject of the Motion that is for debate today, is dated November 20, 2019. If the report that is before the House is dated November 20, 2019, and was circulated and laid in the House in November 2019, how on earth can you have a minority report dated June or July 2019? It is a complete fiction. A total fabrication, Madam Speaker. It is amazing. They think everybody in this country stupid. Stupid! The Member for Oropouche East came— and I have a minority report, look the date. What is it? June 26, 2019, “ah” waving it here. We had a minority report. It is impossible. The minority report has to have the same date as the main report. Ridiculous! Absolutely ridiculous! And you know what—

Dr. Rowley: Excuse.
Hon. C. Imbert: Of course, it is an excuse, hon. Member for Diego Martin West, through you, Madam Speaker. It is absolutely ridiculous. All of them talk to us and talked about the pernicious evils that exist in this unregulated gambling sector. The addiction, the crime, murder, all sorts of heinous crimes taking place in this unregulated sector. Stealing, cheating, intimidation, addiction, exploitation, all of that taking place in this unregulated gambling sector. They know that because they speak to us. They speak to us about it. It is absolutely incredible.

And, you know, Madam Speaker, when you read this executive summary, I just want to read out one section:

“The Joint Select Committee on the Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill…worked arduously to produce legislation that was fit for purpose in a bipartisan effort worthy of plaudits. Each clause of the Bill was meticulously examined, in light of international best practice, to ensure that the Bill did not merely copy other legislation but was adapting these practices to the local context. Contributions from each member were deeply appreciated as they sought to guarantee the rights and liberties of Trinidad and Tobago citizens…”

Madam Speaker, every single one of the Opposition Members who was in this committee agreed with every single clause in this Bill. All 94 clauses. All 20 pages of schedules. They agreed with everything, and at the last minute, they raised a red herring about regulations, so we deferred the laying of the report to have an opportunity to revisit the regulations for the third time, and we had meetings and we went through every single regulation. They did not say a word. They agreed with everything. It is scandalous, Madam Speaker, and obviously there is more in mortar than the pestle. What would motivate Members opposite
being aware of what is going on in this gambling sector? What would motivate them? What would motivate the Member for Tabaquite?

**ADJOURNMENT**

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday the 12th day of February, 2020 at 1.30 p.m. Madam Speaker, at that time we will do the Committee Business, Motion No. 3 as it appears on today’s Order Paper.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 7.39 p.m.*