

Leave of Absence

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

SENATE

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Dr. Lenny Saith, to Senators Laurel Lezama and Gail Merhair who are all out of the country and to Sen. Dr. Carson Charles who is ill.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Prof. George Maxwell Richards, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D.:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency Professor GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D., President and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MR. FOSTER CUMMINGS

WHEREAS Senator Dr. Lenny Krishendath Saith is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, FOSTER CUMMINGS, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 25th November, 2008 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of Senator Dr. Lenny Krishendath Saith.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 24th day of November, 2008.”

Senators' Appointment
[MR. PRESIDENT]

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“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency Professor GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D., President and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: MRS. NAZIMA ALI KNOX

WHEREAS Senator Dr. Carson Charles is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of illness:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, NAZIMA ALI KNOX, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the illness of the said Senator Dr. Carson Charles.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 25th day of November, 2008.”

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency Professor GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D., President and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

/s/ G. Richards
President.

TO: DR. ROLPH BALGOBIN

WHEREAS Senator Gail Merhair is incapable of performing her duties as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

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NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 40(2)(c) and Section 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, ROLPH BALGOBIN, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with immediate effect and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Gail Merhair.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 24th day of November, 2008."

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The following Senators took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law:

Foster Cummings, Nazima Ali Knox, Dr. Rolph Balgobin,

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, there is another Senator to be sworn in but he is not here at the moment, so that instrument would be read out when he arrives and the oath would be taken at that point.

PAPER LAID

Audited financial statements of the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute for the year ended September 30, 2007. [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne)*]

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO NATIONAL STEEL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA (INC'N) BILL

Special Select Committee Report (Presentation)

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George): Mr. President, I have the honour to lay on the Table the following report standing in my name: The First Interim Report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Trinidad and Tobago National Steel Symphony Orchestra Corporation Bill, 2008.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Rent Restriction Act
(Revalidation and/or Amendment of)**

108. Sen. Helen Drayton on behalf of Sen. Gail Merhair asked the hon. Minister of Legal Affairs:

Would the Minister inform this Senate of the steps which are being taken to revalidate and/or amend the Rent Restriction Act, Chap. 59:50?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. President, the answer to question No. 108 is not yet ready. I have no information as to when it will be, but at this point in time we do not have the answer for this question.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Maxi-Taxi Drivers
(Regulation of Route)**

109. Sen. Helen Drayton on behalf of Sen. Gail Merhair asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Would the Minister inform this Senate of the steps, if any, which are being taken, to regulate maxi-taxi drivers who work parts of the route along the East-West Corridor?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. President, question No. 109 is not yet ready.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Vision 2020
(Stage of Implementation)**

111. Sen. Helen Drayton on behalf of Sen. Gail Merhair asked the hon. Prime Minister:

Would the Prime Minister outline to this Senate the stage at which the Government has arrived in the implementation of Vision 2020?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. President, question No. 111 likewise, is not yet ready.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**CORRUPTION AND MISMANAGEMENT
(FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT TO ACCOUNT AND TAKE CORRECTIVE ACTION)**

Sen. Wade Mark: Mr. President, I beg to move the following Motion standing in name:

Whereas there are allegations of widespread corruption and mismanagement of the money spent by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago;

And whereas there are allegations of a lack of transparency;

Be it resolved that this Senate call on the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to account for the manner in which it has conducted the financial affairs of the State and for its failure to take corrective action.

Mr. President, this Motion is very timely, particularly in light of the global financial credit crisis and the slowing down of world economic growth and, of course, its consequential impact on developing countries as well as developed countries.

[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

There are allegations of widespread corruption and mismanagement of money spent by the Government and I will demonstrate how mismanagement and allegations of corruption which are widespread are impacting negatively on our country and we need to call on the Government to give a proper account to this honourable Senate for the manner in which it has conducted the financial affairs of our country. Even in the face of advice and warnings from various quarters, the Government has failed to take corrective action to address these particular matters that I have referred to.

You know, I was going through the newspapers only yesterday—and, Mr. Vice-President, may I inform you that today is Thanksgiving Day in the United States—

Sen. Browne: It is Thursday.

Sen. W. Mark: Well, I wish to apologize. I am wrong, Sir, and I am corrected by my good friend, the hon. Minister Mariano Browne. On Thursday there will be celebrated in the United States of America, Thanksgiving. They must be thankful because they have gotten a young, bright, energetic and forward-looking individual to lead them through the next four years as their President.

1.45 p.m.

They have a lot to celebrate and to be thankful for because they are a people who have matured. They have promoted through President-elect Barack Obama, the critical ingredients necessary for social progress and real development. They have brought about harmony, solidarity and unity in their society.

In Trinidad and Tobago, as we inch towards Thursday to celebrate and observe the American experience, I do not know what we have to be thankful for in this country. What do we have to be thankful for? Maybe, we must thank the PNM for the rampant corruption that this country has been experiencing and that is why this Motion is so relevant today. Maybe, we have to thank the PNM for rampant crime which is inching toward 500 murders and the squandermania, waste and mismanagement of our resources. Trinidad and Tobago and the citizenry of this country cannot be as the people of America.

On Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, they could celebrate family, unity, harmony, togetherness and a forward-thinking young President-elect. Unfortunately, Trinidad and Tobago is in rivers of tears and our streets continue to be stained by the blood of young men and women who are butchered savagely and murdered. Do you know what is even worse, Mr. Vice-President? The killers are still on the loose in this country to commit more murders. The Prime Minister tells this country that he cannot tighten his belt any further, otherwise his spinal cord would be damaged.

I will demonstrate why this Government has continued over the years to mislead the population. I looked at the *Daily Express* of Monday 24 November, 2008 with the screaming headline, “‘No squandermania’ Mariano Browne responds to Selwyn Ryan poll”. I want to quote the first line because I know in his heart that he does not believe what he says. I believe that the time has come for the Minister in the Ministry of Finance to tell this country—while you were in Barbados and working for over \$120,000 a month—how come you are in Trinidad working for less than \$60,000? Is it because of your patriotic love for this country?

Minister in the Ministry of Finance, could you tell us when you rise to speak on this Motion? We are dealing with corruption here. We want to know who is filling the gap. Who is making up the difference? I think that this is a legitimate question. Here the hon. Minister is saying no squandermania. He said that the Government has been spending taxpayers’ money wisely when 74 per cent of the people are saying to this Government that you are on a squandermania trip.

Seventy-four per cent of the population is telling the country and the Government, through a Selwyn Ryan poll, they believe that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is involved in squandermania.

Today, I will demonstrate how this Government is involved in widespread squandermania and corruption of public funds. I will demonstrate to this country and Senate, that whilst they are talking about the ordinary man and woman tightening their belts, they have held our democratic institutions as hostages in this country. I will demonstrate where not only the Parliament and the Judiciary are under attack, but also press freedom in this country is under assault, because the Government is after what is called total and absolute control of this society.

The last vestige, the last institution, the fourth estate they want to clamour and kill is the free press in Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, the invasion and storming of a radio station cannot be seen as just an accident. It was calculated. It was measured. It was premeditated. The Government knew what it was doing at that time. The whole objective was to strike fear, terror and to intimidate people of this country, particularly the journalists in this country. That is what they wanted to do. Just as how they brought down the Chief Justice and sent a message to all the judges and magistrates in the country, they invaded a radio station to tell all the media workers, "Yuh see me, doh tamper wid me, because you are next." That is what it was about. It was an assault on our democratic institutions. This minority Government has embarked on this campaign. That is why no one is surprised. According to page 5 of the *Sunday Express*, November 23, 2008, for the vast majority of working people in this country life in Trinidad and Tobago is worse than five years ago.

Anyone who wanted to determine—we did not need Selwyn Ryan to tell us this. I will show why life is so difficult and hard for ordinary people. Too much "tiefing"! "Too much tiefing taking place in de PNM today!" Too much corruption taking place in "de" PNM today!

Sen. Annisette-George: Mr. Vice-President, I refer to Standing Order 35(5) which speaks about the Senator not imputing improper motives to any Member of the Chamber.

Sen. W. Mark: I never called names here.

Mr. Vice-President: They are all Members of the PNM.

Sen. W. Mark: I did not call names, Sir. If she wants to say she is a "tief"—

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Mark, I think you should withdraw the statement.

Sen. W. Mark: I did not say so. I want you to look at the Standing Order. Read it carefully, Sir.

Mr. Vice-President: I have read it.

Sen. W. Mark: You did not read it.

Mr. Vice-President: I have read it in the past and I know what the Standing Order is. Could you please withdraw the statement of calling—?

Sen. W. Mark: I did not call anybody's name. You cannot validate the Standing Order. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Vice-President: You are telling me what I could do and what I cannot do? If I have validated the Standing Orders, you would deal with it. Could you please withdraw the statement?

Sen. W. Mark: Withdraw what?

Mr. Vice-President: The statement “tiefing in de PNM”.

Sen. W. Mark: What do you want me to say? “Dey not "tiefing"”?

Mr. Vice-President: No. “Tiefing” is not a —. Could you withdraw the statement?

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

Mr. President: Before I take my seat, I was listening to what was being said on the television. Senator, you made two infractions of the Standing Orders. The first one is that you said that there was the storming of a radio station. That quite frankly is misleading the Parliament. It could not be said by any stretch of the imagination that there was any storming of anywhere. Had you said that he stormed in, it would have been something else. To say that there was a storming—

Sen. W. Mark: I withdraw.

Mr. President: Secondly, you went on to say that he went in with a particular intent. That is improper. As you well know, it is improper to impute that kind of conduct to a Member of Parliament.

Sen. W. Mark: Mr. President, I am so glad that you are back. [*Laughter*] I know that you know the Standing Orders.

I was on the issue of an article on page 1 in the newspaper of November 23, 2008. Based on a poll conducted by Selwyn Ryan, the headline is, “Life in Trinidad and Tobago worse than 5 years ago”. The quality of life for the majority of people has sunk, declined, worsened. According to this article, squandermania is on the increase, 74 per cent. Poor leadership and mismanagement are the order of the day. Seventy-four per cent believe that this country has poor leadership. Do not talk about crime; it continues to haunt our nation.

The question that we have to raise here when we talk about allegations of widespread corruption and mismanagement of the money spent by the Government—I will share with you a definition given by the former Secretary General of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. On page (iii) in the Foreword, he said:

“Corruption is an insidious plague that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies... It undermines democracy...”

Our democracy is now being undermined because of corruption.

“the rule of law...”

The rule of law is being undermined in this country.

“leads to violations of human rights...”

Human rights are being violated in this country on a daily basis. Amnesty International attests to the violation of human rights in this country.

“distorts the markets...”

We know what has taken place in terms of contracts being awarded to the friends and families of high ranking officials of the ruling party.

“erodes the quality of life...”

This is why the survey revealed that 74 per cent of the people are living and experiencing a lower standard of living and quality of life.

2.00 p.m.

It allows organized crime to flourish. That is why 500 murders are about to be reached and the Government is numb; the Government does not care. It promotes terrorism and other threats to human security. This evil phenomenon he goes on to say is found in all countries. It is not only in Trinidad and Tobago. He said that it

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is in big and small, rich and poor countries, but it is in the developing world that its effects are most destructive. Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately by diverting funds intended for development and by undermining a government's ability to provide basic services.

A shower came down and the whole country is flooded. You cannot get a passport. For a basic document to travel, you have to take a year and a half to get an appointment. Is the Government holding the population as hostages? Is our freedom of movement being violated because of the inability of the Government to provide a basic service? Corruption feeds inequality.

Today, Mr. President, less than 5 per cent of this population controls over 70 per cent of the wealth and the poor are becoming poorer and the rich richer under this regime. Injustice continues, he goes on, discouraging foreign aid and investment and, therefore, Mr. President, he says that corruption is a key element in economic underperformance and a major obstacle to poverty alleviation and development.

We have to affirm and restore the core values that are supposed to inform democratic societies: values such as honesty—honesty does not exist under this regime any longer; respect for the rule of law; accountability and transparency in promoting development and making the world a better place for all of us. These are the core values that we should strive to achieve in our country today. Instead we have a situation—and I want some answers why, for example, according to the editorial on page 10 of the *Newsday* dated November 25, 2008, headlined, “Why Calder Hart?”.

In another newspaper, the *Newsday*, Monday, November 24, 2008, page 4, “Hart replaces Monteil as HMB head”. Mr. President, do you not find it strange that we need to account in this Parliament? The Government needs to explain why they have sold shares that were purchased by Andre Monteil, seven million shares valued at \$110 million, and the NIB—I want some explanation from the NIB how they were able to buy those shares and give to Mr. Monteil and his wife of Stone Street Capital \$130 million.

Mr. President, is it not shocking to you and this country at a time when people are suffering that someone can in a corrupt way use taxpayers' money and pension funds belonging to working people to buy shares, \$110 million in worth, and then sell them and you buy them now for \$130 million?

I call on the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, who is responsible for NIB, to table the documents informing that decision. We want to know why Mr. Andre

Monteil was able to get \$20 million more from that investment, and further, why a man who is under some serious allegations is supported by this Government in being appointed as chairman of the Home Mortgage Bank Board (HMB).

I ask questions because this is a Government that says it believes in integrity, honesty and transparency. How can they believe in these things and appoint an individual who is now the subject of a commission of enquiry to head the HMB? Why has the Government done this?

The Prime Minister had given us an undertaking that a proper investigation would have been launched. It was sent to the Fraud Squad. It was sent to the DPP. It was sent to the Integrity Commission. Where are those reports? We do not know.

Sen. Browne: Will the Senator give way?

Sen. W. Mark: No, you will speak at the appropriate time.

Sen. Joseph: Mr. President, on a point of order. The Member is misleading the Senate. He said that Calder Hart is the subject of a commission of enquiry. I am not aware that Mr. Calder Hart is the subject of a commission of enquiry.

Mr. President: I did not quite get that, but if he said that Mr. Hart was the subject of a commission of enquiry, that would be a deliberate misleading of the Senate, which is not allowed. I am not sure exactly what you said. Do not go there!

Sen. W. Mark: Thank you, Mr. President. We live in a developing country and I have an article written by an institution called CHR Richardson Institute and it talks about tackling corruption in oil-rich countries and the role of transparency. I want to quote a few lines to demonstrate the extent to which the issue of corruption is extremely serious in the world.

I went to a conference on anti-corruption in Greece recently, which was attended by 1,500 citizens of 340 countries of the world. Do you know the kind of pilfering that has been taking place in many of these countries? They have estimated that over the last 10 years, \$2.5 trillion has been stolen from the public purse of many developing and developed countries. What is even more alarming is that they demonstrated that in natural resource-rich countries, the opportunities for corruption are even greater than in other countries.

The article says that corruption is a huge problem in many developing countries rich in oil and other natural resources and is central in explaining why these countries perform badly in terms of socio-economic development. It

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explained that transparency reform is a key factor in addressing corruption and what is called the resource-curse-related problems.

It tells us that the problem is not confined to Trinidad and Tobago. It is in small countries and big countries; rich countries and poor countries and this Motion seeks to demonstrate that one of the answers to reducing the level of corruption in our country is the need for greater transparency and accountability. That is what we need.

But what we have witnessed over the last few years is the promotion of a culture of secrecy. This Government has been promoting a culture of secrecy and that is why the biggest problem confronting our democracy is large-scale grand corruption in this present administration. That is why attempts are being made when people try to storm in, not storm, radio stations, they want to silence the voice of the people.

In the Parliament they are trying to silence the voice of the people and they believe that because they have the majority they can succeed. If they silence the voice of the people in the Parliament, there is only one more institution, the fourth estate, that is the final nail in the coffin of democracy in our country and that is why they are now after the press. What has happened is not accidental.

There is a report called the *Global Corruption Report, 2004* and its focus is on political corruption. I want to provide a definition of this particular phenomenon. [Interruption] The reason we are here and you are there is that the people had an opportunity to exercise their franchise. It does not give you a licence to do whatever you want. I predict the downfall of this Government because it is involved in this. Let me define it for you.

“What is political corruption?”

Political corruption is the abuse of entrusted power by political leaders for private gain, with the objective of increasing power or wealth.”

This is according to Transparency International.

Mr. President, it says that:

“Political corruption need not involve money changing hands; it may take the form of ‘trading in influence’...”

That is what happened at HMB. Because I am the treasurer of a political party, I have influence so I can manipulate the system. That is political corruption. It says:

"or granting favours that poison politics and threaten democracy.”

It goes on:

“Political corruption involves a wide range of crimes and illicit acts committed by political leaders before, during and after leaving office. It is distinct from petty or bureaucratic corruption in so far as it is perpetrated by political leaders or elected officials who have been vested with public authority and who bear the responsibility of representing the public interest.”

It goes on to say:

“Political corruption is an obstacle to transparency in public life. In established democracies, the loss of faith in politics and lack of trust in politicians and parties challenge democratic values, a trend that has deepened with the exposure of corruption...”

It tells us the disease that has invaded the body politic of our country today.

On page 13 of this book on political corruption, it talks about the embezzlement by some of the most notorious leaders in the last 20 years.

2.15 p.m.

A chap called Mohammed Suharto from Indonesia looted from the public treasury between \$15 billion and \$35 billion. The President of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, looted between \$5 to \$10 million. “He thief and looted de treasury.” Mobuto Sese Seko, \$5 billion; Sani Abacha from Nigeria, over \$5 billion; Jean Claude Duvalier, over \$800—It goes on to talk about Sugurumi and the rest of them. It is not farfetched. It has happened before and it is happening now. I will demonstrate to you, the vehicle that is being used by the officials in this country and by the ruling party, in order to deny the people their just dues in this country.

Therefore, democratic institutions have been taken hostage by the powerful and the few in this country. Decisions are made in secret. What we are demanding today, through this revolution, is a call for greater transparency.

I will demonstrate in a short while, the public procurement system, which has been estimated by Transparency International as low as 10 per cent and as high as 15 per cent of the value of contracts awarded, what is looted and lost to the public, as a result “tiefry” is taking place in those institutions, because of a lack of proper, transparent and open public procurement policies in this country. Therefore, for democracy to strive, grow and flourish, we need greater transparency in our operations.

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I would want to demonstrate to you the kind of squandermania and large-scale corruption that is taking place. The Government has established some 15 or 16 special state purpose companies in this country. These special state purpose companies have their own tendering procedures. They have almost buried alive, the Central Tenders Board. The Government has misled the country for the last four years, by telling this country that they are going to bring a public procurement policy white paper, which will be translated into legislation, in order to regulate and have transparency in the awarding of contracts.

Imagine the Cabinet of the country, according to my sources, approved the White Paper, but they sent it to a “fella” who is in charge of UDeCott and he was supposed to have given his comments on this White Paper on public procurement. They are still awaiting his comments. “Who is the real Prime Minister, de man in charge of UDeCott, or de man who does wear de dark glasses?” Who is the real Prime Minister of this country? Up to this time as we speak, there is no public procurement policy to govern the award of contracts to certain public companies in this country.

What has been the end result? The end result is waste, squandermania and mismanagement. I guarantee you, if that commission of enquiry is provided with two powerful forensic auditors and accountants, a lot of public officials will be facing stiff jail sentences and they will be repatriating tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of dollars, back into the Treasury of this country. Why do you think they want to have a commission of enquiry without a forensic audit attached to it? It is because they know if there is a forensic auditor like Bob Lindquist, many people on the PNM Benches will go to jail.

Do you know why? Tell me and the ordinary people who cannot get pipe borne water; whose children are dying from dengue; and whose children are working for less than \$7 or \$8 per hour as minimum wage in this country. Young men are joining gangs at the age of 7, 8, 9 and 10; where the future of the young people is very, very bleak. Do you know that while all this is taking place, what is taking place elsewhere?

With respect to the Port of Spain Waterfront Project, let the Minister of Finance get up and tell this country how it moved from \$1.6 billion to \$3.2 billion; an increase of over \$1.5 billion. You get up and explain to this nation, who took that \$1.5 billion. Where did that go? That is another avenue for pilfering and siphoning public money. They used the construction industry to promote corruption.

The Brian Lara Cricket Stadium, do you know what they are telling us now? The initial and original price was \$500 million. That is totally untrue; a lie, if I can say that. They are telling the country that the original estimated cost of the Brian Lara Stadium was \$500 million. That is not true. Now it is over \$1 billion and they want to tell us that the cost overrun is \$500 million. Do you know what the original price was? The original contract price for the Brian Lara Cricketing Academy was \$166 million and they were supposed to have completed that project within six months. We are now going into six years. I am exaggerating. It is almost three years now. Do you know what is the situation? There is a cost overrun of over \$700 million. That is what is going on in our country and that is what the Government is presiding over.

The initial estimate for the Government campus was \$2.3 billion. Today, it is over \$2.7 billion; cost overrun of close to \$330 million. It goes on. The Ministry of Public Administration has cost overruns by \$72 million. The education towers of the Ministry of Education started off at over \$368 million and it is now over \$611 million; cost overrun of \$243 million. Do you know what is interesting about this one? The contractor is Shanghai Construction. The project started and it was supposed to have taken 13 months. This project was supposed to have been completed on August 09, 2008. Today is November 25 and the project is 60 per cent completed and will not be completed until the first or second quarter of 2009. Every day, according to that contract, that these people fail to meet the deadline they are supposed to pay to the people of this country \$118,000 or \$3.5 million per month. I want the Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment to rise in this Parliament and tell us, at the appropriate time, whether Shanghai Construction is paying this country \$118,000 or \$3.5 million a month for the period of time that they have violated this contract. "An doh talk about de shoddy workmanship dat is taking place." Right through, as we look, we see where corruption and mismanagement are ingredients that are plaguing this society and, because the Government is not interested in promoting transparency, the corruption and mismanagement continue unabated. We want answers.

We want to know why this Government, contrary to the advice given by the former Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Christine Sahadeo, to the Chairman of Evolving Technologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited, invested some \$18 million or thereabouts into something called the bamboo networks operation? We understand that Trinidad and Tobago spent \$31 million in this Bamboo Networks Limited and this was against the advice given by the former Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Christine Sahadeo. I have the letter signed by

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Christine Sahadeo on January 06, 2005 to Prof. Ken Julien advising him, according to due diligence, not to invest \$33 million into a bamboo network technology operation.

Today Christine Sahadeo is fighting for a job. I understand she just got a job. How she got it? I do not know. I understand she is a senior lecturer at the University of the West Indies in the management division. The only problem is that she only became a lecturer in August of this year, it is now November 25 and she is now a senior lecturer who has been given a contract for three years and there are professors and doctors who have been working there for five, six and seven years who cannot get senior lectureship as yet. But this lady, in less than three months, is now a senior lecturer. She is so bright. Are you sure that it is not corruption?

These are some of the issues we want the Government to address. We want them to tell us how the Chancery Lane project, which I understand is being constructed by John Stone International—John Stone International is owned by a “fella” called Lord Ashcroft who is the owner of the Bank of Belize and whose friend is a “fella” called Mr. Forrester and who is involved in that particular project. I understand that Mr. Calder Hart has a house in Turks and Caicos and he is the neighbour of Mr. Forrester. I want to know if there is a link between Lord Ashcroft, John Stone International and this “fella” called Forrester and, of course, the gentleman in charge of UDeCott. I want to find out, because the construction of the Chancery Lane Administration Complex started off with an initial estimation of about \$450 million. Today, it is over \$650 million; a cost overrun of \$161 million. “Nobody eh geh jail!” There is also the Scarborough Hospital, \$400 million. We are now going to bring Chinese to invest another \$400 million or thereabouts.

I want to indicate to this honourable Parliament that the cost overruns question is real and I might—yes, my good friend from Arima, Mr. Vice-President—want to drum into your ears, so you can understand the suffering of the people. You do not understand that people are suffering in this country because of these kinds of developments.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. President, I think that the time has come for us to have a forensic audit into the purchase of three offshore patrol vessels which, according to our Prime Minister, cost the nation \$2.5 billion.

We intend to write to the Serious Fraud Office in England and provide them with all the evidential documentation that have come into our possession in order for them to carry out an investigation under the Anti-Bribery Convention which governs OECD countries. We believe this is a smelly arrangement. It is very fishy, and I am going to tell you why it is very fishy and why we have to write the Serious Fraud Office in London to investigate this matter.

Mr. President, there were two abortions in this particular arrangement. We had two competitive tendering processes involved, and on the two occasions they were aborted. We have information that the current shipbuilder was involved in a lot of inside dealings and trading. We also have information that the specs were changed in order to facilitate that particular shipbuilder in London. When they could not have their way after the second abortion, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago decided to go government-to-government. When they went government-to-government there were two finalists in the race, the Italians and the English. I have evidential material to show where the Italian proposal was \$1 billion less than what they paid to the English shipbuilding firm. They kicked out the Italians and they went for the more expensive shipbuilder from London.

I want the Minister of National Security to table the government-to-government agreement. We want all the evidence dealing with the Italian, the German and the Swede bids. We want that information to be tabled here and do not come and give me any "ol' talk". I want documented evidence. You must tell this country if you ever visited that shipyard in London. As the Minister of National Security, you must tell this country if you ever visited the shipyard of that company in London, and if you had gone to Italy, Sweden and Germany. If you did not go, why did you not go?

So, we are being told that Soltek, a reputable firm from Sweden, was employed by the State to do a proper evaluation of the tenders, and do you know what they did? They conveniently got rid of Soltek. Do you know who they brought? A fellow called Mr. Innis. Who is Mr. Innis? Where did he come from? He came from the United States of America. His name is Captain Innis from the US Coast Guard; a retiree. The Minister of National Security and the Prime Minister of this country need to provide answers to this country. Were they involved in any underhand dealings in this particular matter? If they were not involved, I call on the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Security to make available publicly all the documents relating to that deal that took place between Vosper Thornycroft of England and the Trinidad and Tobago Government.

Mr. President, do you know what I heard when I was in England recently? Vosper Thornycroft is now part of BAE Systems. BAE Systems, according to the latest Anti-Bribery Report, was involved in bribing a Saudi family to the tune of billions of dollars for a big defence contract and now Vosper Thornycroft is a subsidiary of that same company BAE Systems. So, something is wrong! I have the report here. We are calling on the Government to come clean. Senior officials were involved and members of the coast guard were involved. We are calling for a forensic audit into the purchase of the three offshore patrol vessels in this country.

The statement that the Prime Minister gave was a wishy-washy statement. He gave a statement, but it was wishy-washy. He tried to fool the country, but we have evidential material to show that the Italians came in with \$1 billion less than Vosper Thornycroft.

Mr. President: Senator, I do not think that you can suggest in the Parliament that the Prime Minister attempted to fool anybody. That is completely improper.

Sen. W. Mark: All that I would say is that he made a statement and when I read the statement I saw holes through that statement. Mr. President, I have documentation here dealing with the Real Property Ordinance, a Memorandum of Lease between Orange Grove National Company Limited and a company, PR Trinidad Limited. There is a scheme on. I would tell you about the amount of land involved here, but I am telling you about corruption involved in this Government. We are talking about lands involving 3,186 acres at Orange Grove. Do you know what they did? The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources misled this Parliament, and I am going to demonstrate how he misled this Parliament.

I want the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, Sen. The Hon. Arnold Piggott, to tell this country whether he gave approval to Blue Waters to construct a plant on the premises of Orange Grove National Company Limited. He must tell us! We understand the scheme is to give this land to Blue Waters Limited after the expiration of this contract, I am seeing evidential material information that the Minister needs to account for.

Mr. President, may I just inform you that in terms of transfers and subsidies, it is our information that there has been close to \$20 billion of taxpayers' moneys transferred to state enterprises and special purpose state companies. In terms of contingency liabilities, we understand that it is close to about \$21 million.

We are demanding from the Government to properly account for the manner in which it has conducted the financial affairs of this country. The people are saying that the Government of this country is conducting the affairs of this nation in a manner that is not transparent, accountable and open. The Government is promoting a culture of secrecy in this society, and it is under that particular purview that there is much room for corruption. We believe that close to \$20 billion or \$30 billion—with respect to the Chinese and the Malaysians, we have to investigate the connection between Trinidad and Tobago officials, the Chinese and the Malaysians. It is our view that thousands of millions of dollars are being looted from this country, and we need to investigate that.

We have estimated that close to \$20 billion to \$25 billion has been looted from the Treasury over the last six and a half years. We need a forensic auditor to investigate where the moneys have gone in that regard. So, this resolution is designed to bring the Government to book; to hold them to account; and to let them tell this country why are they not promoting transparency. What are they doing about corruption? Why have they continued to mismanage this economy and this country? What corrective actions they intend to take in order to bring about a greater degree of transparency, accountability, openness and a culture where people can feel relieved and that this Government is really committed to honesty, integrity, openness and accountability.

I beg to move.

Seconded by Sen. Dr. Adesh Nanan.

Question proposed.

Sen. Basharat Ali: Mr. President, I did not really propose to speak on this Motion before us, because I really do not subscribe to the Motion itself in its present form, but looking at the preamble or the recital and when I see “*Whereas* there are allegations of lack of transparency”, I think I would do myself a disfavour if I did not speak to that.

Mr. President, we in this country have been under that cloak of silence with respect to what we are doing about the public sector procurement regime. It is over three years since this Government laid a White Paper on Public Sector Procurement and about which very little has happened. Each year there is a little statement in the budget. That Paper was adopted by the Government and the construction sector, and the legislation was supposed to be in place and it was never put in place.

This year in the budget statement there is the most watered-down statement that I have seen. I did refer to it in my contribution on October 08, 2008, and I drew the Senate's attention to what was said then in terms of the White Paper and procedures or policies with respect to procurement, specifically by state enterprises. The budget statement then said that it proposes to provide online procurement in the form of an e-government platform for tendering process, as well as for the dissemination of procurement information to the general public; to strengthen the present public sector procurement tendering rules; and to standardize the rules and processes to be used by the state enterprises.

So, what has disappeared completely is reference to the legal framework for putting into place a public sector procurement regime. The Government has never come out and said that it does not like it or it wants to amend it and to bring the law which puts into place a regulator.

2.45 p.m.

I think everybody who is concerned with construction or with projects, and with the position of the state enterprises, must be very disturbed by that. Only last night I was looking at "Big Story". Following the hon. Minister's interview with the host of that programme, there was Mr. Emile Elias and he once again said, as I would say today, those three years have gone by since the White Paper and nothing has happened.

We need it; we need the laws to be able to do it. If people make allegations about the Government not being transparent, then it is nobody else's fault but the Government, that nothing concrete has happened. What was said in the budget statement does not make any sense to me. I said so in my contribution to the budget, and I will not repeat what I said.

That is one area of lack of transparency and a very important area when it comes to expenditure. As I said many times before, we all speak about transparency, accountability and value for money. When I say it I mean it and I do not pay lip service to it. If I have to accuse the Government of anything is to say that they are also on that mantra, but they are not doing anything about it. I have to say that they are more than allegations; they are now stronger than allegations, that there is lack of transparency in that process. I do not know which one it is, which procurement process can be said to be clear of it. We only hear about all the arrangements, from government-to-government arrangements to other arrangements. I will not go into the details of it today; I have a number of projects one can talk about.

The question of transparency is important and this present budget statement in September of this year gives so many examples of it. When we go to projects, for example, I had to go and search to get information on some of the projects listed there; the project listed on conversion of natural gas to single cell protein. That was almost one line in that budget statement, but nobody saw anything else. There was mention of a company called UNIBIO, and that is the only way I found out. I went there and found out who UNIBIO is and UNIBIO, in their press release—not our press release, we have never had one—said what this project was all about. We have never said it really; we knew it was some project with UTT and very vague about it in fact. I said in my budget contribution what I found out and nobody said otherwise as to what the research project is.

Similarly, we have that very big project, the natural gas to polypropylene project. It is a huge project and once again, the major part of my information came not from the budget statement, but from the press release from the foreign partners. Lurgi and Basell are the principal ones who gave press releases. I drew attention to that project primarily because of the cost. For the first time we were seeing that that project had escalated by 60-odd per cent, from US \$1.5 billion to a quoted figure of US \$2.5 billion; that is all we saw.

The hon. Minister of Trade and Industry, sitting in for the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries in the debate here did give some information—I was thankful for the information he gave—as to what we had committed ourselves to: to equity—evidently a gas price has been decided formally; I did not know the fact that that plant was now going to be in Point Lisas, not Union Estate, which was what I had seen before.

All those things come to many people as a surprise. That is my area and I can get the details of it by searching. I can search; I can speak to some people; I do not like to do too much of that. It is very important that we come clean to the people and come clean to Parliament on all these matters, otherwise everybody will be criticizing and making accusations. This is why we get to that state.

We are in this situation now where we are reexamining projects. Let us take the rapid rail. As I said, in last year's budget statement, there is no feasibility study on it, but we do not have any information in the public domain, really. The hon. Dr. Saith also gave us a position on that one, but that phase one is \$67 million, I think—my good friend, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance probably will calculate that much more readily than I can. I think it is TT \$420

million or TT \$440 million for that first phase, which was just design. I am sure if I go and check in the *Hansard* I will find the hon. Minister of Works and Transport saying before this project was going to be let, we can stop this project any time.

So, when we are hearing now—and it is not yet official—that the project cannot be stopped and they have to look at the payment schedule, I was pretty certain they would have to pay. That is a big amount, US \$67 million, and what are we doing it for; can we stop it even if we have to pay a little penalty? They will close off the work; that is the consultancy; that is the design; there is nobody procuring anything, because from what I understand, when I asked where is the route for this train and whatnot; whether it is up or below ground or wherever, the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry said that is part of the work of the study.

There we have a project which I thought could be stopped and when we see where we are, if we want to get back there, there is nothing to lose from it. Where you were doing construction is quite different, so you really have to think twice before you stop a project, because you lose if you stop a project in midstream. For example, people are talking about the Petrotrin project, gasoline optimization. To me, that is a project of survival and it would be crazy to stop that, because it means then whatever happens, Petrotrin would be in trouble, and the construction part of these plants will deteriorate to the point where we are going to spend more money if we have to restart it again.

Those are the kinds of things that I have seen. Apart from that, right now the same thing is happening within the Ministry of Public Utilities. Water and wastewater, a master plan, which has been done by Genivar. I believe the cost of just the consultancy is TT \$44 million. That is plenty money for a consultancy, but we do not know what it is really, except in the budget debate in the other place, the Minister of Public Utilities gave a long statement with respect to that, and out of that came primarily talk about the desalination plants plus this grid.

As I said then and I say it again, the first item there was that we are losing 50 per cent of the produced water. So, what are we talking about desalination? There is something that should be cut straight away now. We cannot afford five desalination plants, and any engineer will tell you that. The first thing you do is correct that, and if you have to lay new pipelines, et cetera to save the water which you are producing now, then that is the first thing. Do not put on desalination plants because you have the money.

I see that WASA is having some consultation now, I think it is still out and it is primarily for the benefit of the EMA and the Certificate of Environmental Clearance, which they may have applied for, I do not know, but the consultations are way out east into places like Sangre Grande, et cetera; I have not seen any coming westward to us. So, we are all still in the dark except for these statements and plans which were given by the hon. Minister of Public Utilities during the budget debate in the other place; there was no other place where it was said.

There it is another project, what we are going to do when we reach the stage now where money is important; where we spend it is important. What are we going to look at? There is no question of the water. Somebody said—I do know whether facetiously or otherwise—with all this rain the reservoirs are full. There is so much secrecy.

For example, in WASA, they have released three top people in that organization, without any mention. The communication specialist never said who their names are, but I know one person whose name is there. He is the divisional manager of operations; the second person in line to the chief executive officer. More than that, he is a chairman in one of the WHO committees, and he is gone. Why he is gone, we do not know. We just know that these three people have gone. The information is that when their contract expires they will have no contract. That is informal information. They are on indefinite leave until the end of their contract, and the word is their contract will not be renewed. Why? We do not know.

So, there is WASA already very inefficient. I would say it openly, it is an inefficient company. If you are losing 50 per cent of your water production you must be an inefficient company, and it is a big drawdown. The amount of money required by WASA is huge. So, you have to make sure you are going correct. We do not know; this Parliament does not know anything about it except in very vague terms. As I said, Genivar has not really laid its study to the public; I have been reading the press. The press said the Genivar people said they cannot give anybody the report, but yet you have little snippets coming out of the system. So, evidently somewhere around not only water is leaking but the report is leaking. We do not ask for it so we do not get it.

Downtown planning is the same thing; I refer this to the hon. Minister of Local Government. We keep hearing about downtown plans for traffic-free shopping, promenades, and everything else, but we do not know what it is. Who did the study? I presume it is Genivar who has been doing it, but we do not know

anything about it. This kind of secrecy also does not work; you only get snippets here and there, and then we who are supposed to be the people who are the lawmakers, who are supposed to look after the interest of the people, really do not have anything to go by.

Mr. President, recently I was very disturbed because there was a Caribbean Health Week or something like that, and do you know they just had one advertisement two days before the Saturday that they were closing a whole set of areas in Frederick Street to have some show or parade or something like that. My family and I have a business on Frederick Street; we did not know, I read it in the newspaper. I spoke to one of the deputy commissioners, who said that is what they said. Sure enough from 6.00 a.m. on a Saturday morning they closed the roads to do, I am not too sure, something related to health, Caribbean Health Week, I think it was called. I never saw a notice, I believe when that has to happen the police are supposed to put out a notice, and that was not there and nobody knew. I happened to see it and told my wife, who is the managing director of our company, you would have to go down early to get in, and she did. She went in before 6.00 a.m. and got into the office, but the problem was to get out at 1.00 p.m. or whatever it was.

That is the kind of thing that happens here, and I take strong exception to when that kind of situation arises, and nobody can say anything about it, not even the police. As I said, I had the number of one of the deputy commissioners, and I spoke to him, and all he was saying is this was going to happen. I asked him, well, are you not supposed to have a police notice to that effect when you are closing the whole of downtown Port of Spain, and maps, et cetera, in the release from the Ministry? The Ministry of Health had the release I believe, on that occasion, but not to the people who are involved in business.

3.00 p.m.

Those are the things that seem to happen all the time and it disturbs me and it shows that there is a lack of any regard for many of the people who are involved. We are the stakeholders, whether we are sitting here, whether we have business, et cetera, we are the stakeholders and when we find that we are in this situation without being able to prepare for any contingency, then it is really a terrible kind of thing, and all this kind of lack of transparency is what concerns me.

This is why I said I was going to make a very brief statement. I do not wish to speak any further on it but just to say that we will see now—I know there is a lot of criticism of the Government now—in a day or two, Wednesday or Thursday—I

think we will see what is going to happen in the front of how we are going to spend the money. I am a project-oriented person, every project I see, they say it is going to continue, even the offshore island they say is going to continue. I do not know but I will be surprised, I will want to know what they are going to put on Otaheite Island which is supposed to be an industrial park area.

So, Mr. President, as I say, I will not be willing to support this Motion in its present form. I can look at it, but I say what I have said and what I have said I do it because I feel that there should be much more connectivity between the people of this country and the Government.

Thank you.

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Mariano Browne): Mr. President, I rise to add my contribution and rebuttal to some of the points which have been made by Sen. Mark and perhaps to answer some of the statements.

I remember not too long ago in this Senate when the *Newsday* editorial of October 08—I think, in the budget debate—did make the point that Sen. Mark is more often wrong than right.

Sen. Joseph: And most of the time he is off the mark.

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: And if we were to pun a bit on the Senator's good name, he is today once again off the mark. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

He seems to be very well informed of my pecuniary and personal conditions and circumstances.

Sen. Piggott: He is a banker. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: And even if he were, I was not aware that he was privy to my monthly income, at least such as it was one year ago. But he is correct, I did suffer a substantial decline by moving from my previous employment to the one in which I currently find myself and he is also correct to enquire as to the reasons why one should take such a massive cut in salary.

Well, I must tell you, as did Sen. Ramkhelawan, not too long ago, those who eat the “cascadoora” must return to their native land, and I have. I have returned to try to make a contribution in an area in which I have some experience and I was persuaded—I wonder if that is the correct word—[*Laughter*] encouraged to find a

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new way. I must say it has presented me with some challenges, some dichotomies, some conundrums in terms of this new paradigm in which I find myself and in which I have had to reinvent myself, but I must assure you that I bring with me that which I have learnt, which is you must make do with what you have.

Sen. Dr. Dick-Forde: Very good. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: And that I will make do with my current income and it does not need to be supplemented in any way by any form of corrupt activity or, if you will, the use of political influence. I was intrigued by your definition of political corruption, if only to remind you, Sen. Mark, that those who live in glass houses ought not to throw stones. [*Interruption*]

I believe there is a leader of a political party who is currently before the court for a substantial bank account which bears little relation, as you were quick to point out, to his income. I believe also that a number of connected parties and at least one former minister in an administration in which you were present, are also before the court in a matter which resulted from a commission of enquiry.

I shall say no more on that except to remind you once again to be very careful in terms of your definition, those things have a way of rebounding and—how shall we call it—deflating the allegations that you are making about those of us on this side and I shall do what is required to protect the good name and reputation of my colleagues, my friends and the people who have worked with me and who, like myself, have sacrificed much to be in this position.

You did also go on to talk about the press and the attack on press freedom. I want to make the point that the press if anything at all and the multiplicity of agencies that exist—it is clearly difficult to deal with all of them, but there are a couple of them that are worthy of identification. There has been the concept and the difficulty that is identified with falling standards of reporting and also what we would have to say, inaccuracies. I had the misfortune of not having enough time yesterday to read the press but this morning I did try to catch up—I was in my office a bit early, around 6 o'clock—and I decided that I would have a little look at some of the editorials and one caught my attention. This is the second time in approximately four days that there are inaccuracies which are ascribed to me, an inaccuracy which is reported on page 10 of the *Newsday* Section A, November 24 and the third paragraph says this:

“Mr. Browne also claimed that the relationship between gas prices and revenue was so complex that it was virtually pointless to peg the budget to

natural gas rather than oil even though natural gas accounts for over three quarters of the country's earnings.”

Well, from a logical perspective, there are at least two contradictions in the space of that sentence. I want to say very categorically that I never said anything like this; nothing could be further from the truth. And this would be the third occasion—second actually because I let the second one pass—on which I would have had to write to the *Newsday* to let them know that the inaccuracies which they put in their editorials are unconscionable. If I have made the point and I made the point in a letter to the editor in response to the article that was published on October 17 and I wrote on October 18, and the letter was published on October 19 in the “Letters to the Editor” section.

I made the point in that letter and I will make it again, that a substantial portion of our fiscal revenue comes both from oil and gas, but by definition, the most significant contributor to our revenues is gas in the ratio of approximately 9:1 and 9:1 is conservative. I noticed somebody in a letter to the editor yesterday did point out that for every fall of one cent in the gas price we lose approximately \$11 million, but for a fall of \$1 in the oil price we lose US \$15 million. I think that person came much closer to the mark and clearly they understand it. But the *Newsday* goes on to contradict itself in the last two paragraphs by actually working out some revenue numbers. I make the point that once again while we speak of freedom of the press, clearly there is need for an improvement in reporting standards and there is certainly a need for an improvement in the factual reporting. We should at least, when we are reporting and the headline goes to say the shortfall could be \$10 billion and you are attempting to prove it, well, you could at least get the arithmetic right. I make that point!

So that when you talk about attacks on press freedom, I want you to be very careful, because we are making the point that the press, has as a requirement, not merely to report but to report responsibly and to report accurately and alternatively, when it does not report accurately that they should correct themselves [*Interruption*] and give appropriate apologies. [*Desk thumping*] Do not bury the apology somewhere in the back of the newspaper. [*Interruption*] I think that is a very important point.

Sen. Piggott: I wonder if Sen. Mark is hearing that. I wonder if he is hearing.

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: Sen. Mark sometimes has other difficulties.

Sen. Mark: I did not hear you—[*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: Sen. Mark makes much ado about the issue of wastage and I think in many instances we really have to say—and he was correct—allegations. Allegations, I think in the dictionary are deemed to be unsubstantiated statements. With respect to mismanagement I could not do better than return to the press release which was issued by the IMF after its Article IV consultation with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Its press release was issued on November 17 as part and parcel of a public press release and perhaps I may do well—*[Interruption]* The press statement which was issued by the IMF Mission for Trinidad and Tobago, the 2008 Article IV Consultation Discussion with Trinidad and Tobago. It was issued on November 17 and it is published on their website.

Mr. President, I want to make the point that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had well in hand a review of its revenue position, of its budget position prior to the visit of the IMF. In fact, the IMF visit reviewed the figures which had been proposed by the Ministry of Finance as part of its review of the budget process. The changes in the budget process which were announced by the Prime Minister were not the—how should I call it—suggestions or the recommendations of the IMF. The IMF reviewed the Government's position and the Government had all the time through its various spokesmen, myself included, had been making the point that economic management had carried us to a situation where the reserves of the country were strong, the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund was well invested, well spread and the Government and the Central Bank's reserves, its foreign exchange reserves were also well invested and strong. In addition to which the Government had other reserves which were available in the event that we found ourselves in any difficulty other than the spillover effects which we currently face.

The IMF goes on to say in the fourth paragraph of its press release:

“Trinidad and Tobago is better placed than many countries to weather the international financial crisis.”

I make the point again:

“Trinidad and Tobago is better placed than many countries to weather the international financial crisis.” *[Desk thumping]*

Again, it is not the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, it is the IMF in its voluntary consultation, and I make the point that the consultation was not visited upon us because there were falling oil prices or there were falling gas prices. This

consultation was had in the previous year as well and Sen. Mark has come to this Parliament and quoted from the consultation extensively. [*Interruption*]

I go on:

“External vulnerability is low, as a result of large international reserves and low debt ratios. Moreover, the banking sector has entered the period of global turmoil from a position of strength, being well capitalized, liquid, and profitable, and funded mainly through domestic deposits and equity, as opposed to external borrowing.”

That is an example of prudent financial management.

3.15 p.m.

That is where this country finds itself. It was not visited by a boom which took place overnight for which we found ourselves unprepared. In fact, the groundwork and preparation for that positioning, the substantial increase in incomes which took place over the period 2007 and 2008, where we exceeded our budget by approximately \$12 billion in income, was laid in the ‘90s with a decision to monetize and make a very difficult business decision with regard to the monetization of gas resources by the creation of LNG. That was a very substantial decision.

I have had to go on record in this Parliament to defend some of the very people whom you would vilify and charge with all forms of corruption and misstatements that have been made in the public domain for somebody we should hold in the highest regard, and that person is Prof. Ken Julien who continues to do so in changing and bringing to the educational and industrial landscape an institution that will help and position this country by generating a stronger technical infrastructure at the level of our human resources than we presently or purposely had in the past. That is not to be underestimated.

Instead what we have had in this Senate several times, questions have been asked: “Where de money gone?” “Where de money went to?” “How yuh funding University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT)?” “We ain’t see no financial statements.” We laid in this Senate financial statements which were audited, had clean audit reports which accounted for the funds invested in that particular institution and which had been invested in the education of our children. Yet they continue to make allegations about misappropriation of funds which is completely unacceptable. [*Interruption*] That is to be compared with an airport which we are still fixing.

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Points have been made also with respect to the procurement approach as though none existed. Again, Mr. President, that is an overstatement of immense proportion. The Central Tenders Board legislated in 1961 is alive and well and works. There are exceptions to the use of the Central Tenders Board which are documented in law. One of them is the use of the special purpose companies and in particular, the first such company was the National Insurance Board, and there was an amendment to the law in 1979 which identified that specific change.

I want to make the point as well that those eight special purpose entities that Sen. Mark is referring to—not the 15 or 16—were the subject of a question in this Senate earlier this year in April. I think it was question No. 24 or 26, if I remember correctly, where we identified the method of procurement that was used by these various agencies as well as the funds which were parts of the Government's budgeting process which had been allocated to these agencies. I think that is clear, and it is already in the record of *Hansard* and I will not deal with it any further.

I also wish to point out with respect to the position with a company called UDeCott, which is subject to a commission of enquiry which has been widened to broaden and to include the state of the construction sector generally and the contracting industries in particular, because we have been subject to a number of difficulties including the vexed questions of cost overruns because of inadequate designs, and we accept that, not the fact that it has happened. We accept that it is something which needs to be dealt with and we need to establish a modus operandi in dealing with what I would consider a very self-interested part of the community, which as part of the political process in the run up to the commission of enquiry, has caused to be presented a survey which says that Government has been wasting money. I guess if every day you read in the newspapers that somebody has said the Government is wasting money, particularly from self-interested parties, eventually you will begin to believe what you read and that is the difficulty with that particular survey. [*Crosstalk*]

In fact, that you referred to it, I do not even want to give credibility to the survey results because it cannot be 74 per cent of 1.3 million people. I agree it is 74 per cent of 1,000 persons and I am not certain on what basis the selection was made, and having said that, the originator and the person who was commissioned to do the survey, as you notice, with your own political history behind you, joins you as well in that *Newsday* article when it comes to political projections. Unfortunately, Selwyn Ryan has been more often wrong than right. [*Laughter*] I suspect he has been right about you.

But we go back to the issue of the public procurement process. A number of matters had been laid with regard to the lack of transparency. There is no question about it, this Government has undertaken a large number of infrastructural projects and a significant number of new initiatives.

I notice Sen. Ali made the point about leakages not only in WASA pipes, but in WASA's public relations issue where snippets of the report had been leaked to the press. I notice as well, that my friend Sen. Mark in his comments on the overruns as he pointed out—and they are not overruns, but I shall deal with that—was also reading from a photocopy of a UDeCott letter. [*Interruption*] When in point of fact you referred to the financing of the waterfront project, one with which I happen to be a little familiar and you speak about the cost rising from \$1.6 billion to \$3.2 billion, I know where you got the \$1.6 billion from because that is the cost of the contractor on a fixed price basis for the completion of the physical infrastructure, and that is the exterior physical and construction works. It does not speak to the outfitting cost, or all the other incidental costs which together go up to \$2.8 billion, including the financing cost and the cost of arranging it. So the amount of \$3.2 billion is not correct, nor is it correct to say that there was an overrun of \$1.6 billion to \$3.2 billion. That is completely out to sea, it has no basis in fact, and the last person to have said something along those lines—and again we speak of press freedom—would have been the business editor of the *Trinidad Guardian* who also made an allegation on similar points which was refuted categorically in the public domain and the facts were proven where he was absolutely wrong in his arithmetic. And you, like editor Wilson, are wrong.

So with regard to the public procurement process, and let me speak to the issue of where the future is, I take the point that the White Paper was published. For all of its weaknesses and it was agreed to. I accept that the White Paper with all its weaknesses was published, and I have the responsibility for which I am currently late and I accept responsibility for that, for reviewing the implications of the White Paper and in determining a method for us to move forward. I make the point that there is an existing methodology; it is not to say that public procurement does not work and there is no public procurement methodology. It does work. The Central Tenders Board is still the acquisition arm of the Government including a number of state enterprises which all have procurement methodologies, one of which is going to be the subject of a commission of enquiry so we will see how that would stand out. We have faith that it would come out well, but there is a well-defined public procurement methodology, and also three different points of review: the review of the central audit committee, the

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review of the ministerial committee and each individual company is subject to external audit and those accounts are presented to this honourable Senate, laid on the Table and subject to review by the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee (PA(E)C). So it is not right to say that no procedure exists.

I do accept the fact that a number of large projects have found their way into the public domain after Government announced an initiative and in Government's announcement of an initiative there is a large difference between announcing an initiative and having a final project where we have moved from memorandum of understanding to final signed agreement and therein lies the dichotomy. In the process of moving from a memorandum of agreement in terms of your choice of partners, to eventually getting a final project on stream and off the ground, there is a lot of time that elapses.

I understand the sense of frustration particularly with respect to the statements with regard to water where, as you point out, 50 per cent of it is lost. A stated fact, the Government came to this Senate, laid on the Table a statement by the Minister which articulated the development and infrastructural issues moving forward. I understand your point that desalination plants are expensive, one of the reasons they are considered—and remember the plan as stated also includes relaying distribution, converting waste water into usable industrial water, it includes dams, it is quite a comprehensive plan and an interministerial team with a public procurement acquisition process has been established to push that plan along. It was waiting on the final report from Genivar which report has been had so more specific and concrete developments can now be set. And as you are well aware, Sen. Ali, initial announcements and plans have to be concretized, opportunity costs identified and the best methodology to move forward worked out. That is where the ministerial team is presently

To announce the specifics of where the plan is also creates an expectation in the minds of certain parts of the community that this will happen. What happens when the specific advice and feasibility studies show something differently? So Government from a policy perspective is on the horns of a dilemma. It needs to tell the public where it is going, what it is seeking to do, but with the same token, if it announces the specifics in specific areas, it also has the difficulty of explaining why that has changed, and in the public's mind, it is far easier to tell them what we have finally decided than to explain why we are not going to do something else. That is a real conundrum from a public policy perspective.

With respect to the issue of—and I make the point while we are on the issue of procurement that a number of interministerial committees have been set up which have been very rigorous and the point that was made by Sen. Mark where the offshore procurement vessels had been brought into the public light and how it has worked. It was so rigorous that the first two procurement tenders were scrapped because it was felt that they were inadequate, deficient and did not yield the correct result, and rather than go through—

Sen. Mark: Fraud Squad.

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: Sen. Mark, you know the tragedy is that you sometimes behave yourself. You get trapped in your own rhetoric so it blinds you from the possibilities and opportunities but I am dealing with the matter. That interministerial team hired a procurement expert and the acquisition of that expert was subject to a rigorous process of evaluation so that we arrived at a proper consultant.

3.30 p.m.

The whole idea is allowed for in the Central Tenders Regulations. The Central Tenders Regulations do recognize the need that in certain public procurement exercises the necessary expertise will not exist within the civil service; will not exist within the Government sector and that it is necessary to identify those resources and bring them on board to move the process forward, and that particular process and that particular detail was the process which was done in that particular matter. I might add that it has been done and it is also in process for water—very importantly; it is also in position for health, having had our difficulties with hospitals. *[Interruption]*

Sen. Mark: Let Joe talk for himself!

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: He will. I am simply outlining the process for what I am responsible and we have made the additional steps to move from very simply the publication of a request for proposals, to identifying in the first instance—*[Interruption]* I am even having difficulty hearing myself now. *[Laughter]*

Sen. Dr. Dick-Forde: “Doh” get distracted; that is the strategy. The strategy is to distract you.

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: So the process has been moved simply from the development of a request for proposals to an important technical step, the identification of the relevant alternatives and the relevant parties who can bring

the necessary skills and technical work to the table by developing a new technical development which is called a request for information. In the request for information, what you do is set out your objectives; you set out what you wish to achieve; what you want to do and you ask the best practice firms to provide you with examples of what they are capable of and how they would do it. On the basis of that you then select and preselect the parties whom you will invite to tender, and on that basis you define your specifications. For example, if you want an offshore patrol boat that goes at 50 knots, that can fire a 20mm gun within five degrees of accuracy, you will put that in your specification and you will find out who can do it. So a person who comes to you who can do it at 45 knots an hour, does not fit the specifications and, by definition, will not be part of the tender process.

That is what the inter-ministerial committees have been doing and how they have been supplemented by the use of the Central Tenders Board and the central tenders procedure. So it is, in fact, quite rigorous and to presume that because BAE has bought VT well after the tender was awarded, I might add—and you omitted to say that—that because BAE was involved somewhere else in something else, then we, somehow or the other, would fall guilty to that.

Sen. Mark: VT was a (*Inaudible*) company in the first instance.

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: That is osmosis; I forget. I do not know what to call it; I really do not. [*Interruption*] It is an extension of the worst kind that does not work.

Sen. Mark: They are setting you up. You have a reputation to protect—

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: Yes, and I will protect that reputation. When I come out of this, Sir, I will be good and my reputation will be intact. I do not necessarily want to class me with you, not by a long stretch of the imagination. [*Interruption*]

To continue along the point dealing with the issue of procurement, it was so amazing to me—“restore core values”; “honesty”; “respect for the rule of law”; “accountability”. When I looked at this definition of political corruption again, I have to say you have to be careful when you throw stones; so many of them land in your own yard.

One other point that was made with the issue of the acquisition of HMB shares by the National Insurance Board.

Sen. Mark: Tell me about Blue Waters.

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: I want to be very careful in the statements in which—I would ask and invite Sen. Mark to be very careful in the statements that he has made. Before the week is out, a very detailed statement will be made about that acquisition where the principle that was established by the Prime Minister speaking to Parliament, where he indicated that no profit would be earned by Mr. Monteil, has been maintained and I am pretty certain that the statement, when it comes out, will give you the facts that will deal with that. I am not in a position now to identify what the specifics are, but I want to assure you that a statement will be made which will address that issue, and that there was no improper use of taxpayers' funds.

Sen. Mark: How much money it was, \$130 million?

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: As I said, Sen. Mark, in good time. Before the week is out you will have the answer and the Prime Minister will respond to you on that matter and that matter will go before Cabinet on Thursday. So before Friday you will have your answer.

I want to caution you again, Sen. Mark—I must caution you—that when you speak of individuals who are not in a position to defend themselves in this House—

Sen. Mark: Like who?

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: Like actually Calder Hart. I think that you need to be a little careful again—

Sen. Mark: He should be in jail.

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: Again, what can I say to you—

Sen. Mark: I could have defended Calder Hart?

Sen. The Hon. M. Browne: I do not want you to. I am sure that he would be able to defend himself.

So in dealing with the allegations which have been made by Sen. Mark, I know that he has repeated them often and there is one thing that I have to say of my honourable colleague on the other side, is that he has the gift of repetition. If you say it often enough, eventually you become to believe it and I want to say in the circumstances and the evidence which he has said that he has presented, in fact, is not evidence of any fashion. I want to make the point that the Government

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has presented and defended the affairs of this honourable House and of this country in a manner which is responsible, which is befitting of a responsible government and the financial condition of this country is in good order.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Adesh Nanan: Mr. President, I rise to make a contribution on this Motion before the House dealing with corruption and mismanagement by the Government. As I do so, I want to debunk the misleading argument put forward by the speaker before me, Minister Mariano Browne, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance.

The former Prime Minister, the current Leader of the Opposition and political leader of the United National Congress, the hon. Basdeo Panday, is a victim and continues to be a victim of a grand political conspiracy hatched, inspired and driven at Balisier House. This conspiracy has been fully exposed in the Mustill Report. You will recall the Chief Justice was fully exonerated and Mr. Panday's conviction was quashed by the Appeal Court of Trinidad and Tobago. However, Mr. Panday has been and continues to be a victim of PNM-inspired conspiracies.

As I get into the meat of my contribution, I want to deal with a matter with respect to a complex being built at the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery. It is an administrative complex that started in 2006 and it is supposed to be finished in 2009. The complex is costing \$360 million. There was another project that started a little later and is going into 2009 which is the overpass in the Gasparillo area and the allocation is \$150 million.

Now if we compare, in terms of the mismanagement we are looking at right now with respect to the Motion, we have an allocation of \$360 million to finance an administrative complex for 600 employees of Petrotrin, and we have a tabling of \$150 million for an overpass in the Gasparillo area where thousands of people on a daily basis are inconvenienced. Where is the priority? Because we are looking at almost the same time period in terms of the construction of an administrative complex as compared to the overpass in that particular area to benefit thousands, and we are comparing \$150 million to a \$360 million figure for an administrative complex.

If you look at the particular area and the community in terms of the Gasparillo area, you will realize that a certain amount of that allocation could have gone to improving a major part of the road network in that constituency where much more would have benefited in terms of utilizing part of that allocation to help in that area.

If you look at the gas optimization programme and the allocation, you would see that the cost overrun in that particular project goes from \$4 billion—the estimate was initially \$4 billion; it is now \$8 billion; it is doubled; \$8 billion for the gas optimization project for the Pointe-a-Pierre upgrade for that refinery. We have to ask several questions. Doubling from \$4 billion to \$8 billion? Do you know how much money in terms of if that is really cost overruns of \$4 billion, what that money could have been used for? We see in terms of our hospitals, the shortage of beds; with respect to the construction of schools, the protest at the Rousillac Hindu School for a new school; we see the farmers could have been given incentives instead of the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources saying that they are deliberately planting on river beds to gain compensation.

As we deal with that particular matter of mismanagement, I just want to look—and I would draw reference—at a particular article from thestar.com on November 19, 2008 and the headline is: “Global crisis creates ghost resort towns”. This is Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic. It states:

“The ocean glows a milky turquoise. Tiny waves lap at the powder-beige sand, in no rush to reach the line of postcard-perfect palm trees.

Hundreds of luxury villas are positioned to take in the view, but there are no guests. There are no roofs either; neatly tied bundles of red tiles are stacked outside. The wind slams doors and rustles the yellowed newspaper taped to the windows.

The paralyzed scene at the Cap Cana resort, a development including four luxury hotels, three golf courses and a mega-yacht marina, is a victim of a global financial crisis that has hit the Caribbean’s tourism industry especially hard.

Cap Cana fired 500 workers last month after Lehman Brothers declared bankruptcy and a \$250 million loan fell through. Talks to re-negotiate a \$100 million short-term loan collapsed last week, and more layoffs are expected.

‘Our project has been affected by the economic tsunami that has paralyzed the global financial markets,’ said Cap Cana President Ricardo Hazoury.

Construction is also paralyzed at the Ritz-Carlton Molasses Reef resort in secluded West Caicos, where 60 Chinese workers revolted last month to demand back wages. About 160 workers have been sent home to China, and it’s unclear when construction will resume at the hotel, marina and condominium project, which is three-quarters complete.

This month, the sprawling Atlantis resort in the Bahamas laid off about 800 workers, citing low occupancy rates. Baha Mar Resorts Ltd. laid off about 40 employees at its Sheraton Resort in the Bahamas and 40 more at the Wyndham Nassau Resort. The Bahamas Hotel Catering and Allied Workers Union has called a demonstration Thursday to demand government aid.

‘I’ve been in the business 38 years. I have seen the impact of the Gulf War. I have seen the recession of the 80s. Certainly Sept. 11,’ said Robert Sands, senior vice president of external affairs at Baha Mar. ‘But nothing has been of a global nature, which makes the current financial situation we’re in much more worrisome.’

In Puerto Rico, the Caribe Hilton laid off more than 50 people this month because of rising costs and sluggish occupancy rates.”

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“The last time the hotel had to lay off workers was after the Sept. 11 attacks, General Manager Jose Campo said.

‘What worries me is that this will last longer,’ he said. ‘We are mounting an aggressive campaign, but the situation is what it is.’ Even the normally busy holiday season is expected to be relatively quiet.”

If you look at the situation in Tobago, Hilton has laid off workers. I will give an example. One of the workers in that particular hotel was renting an apartment where the owner of the apartment complex is a Trinidadian. Because of the demand at that time with respect to apartments in Tobago, the landlord went further to put in air condition units and make the building more friendly for the tenant. With this laying off in the hotel the tenant could not afford to keep the apartment and left and returned to Trinidad. The landlord does not have that tenant’s income again. The economic downturn is a ripple effect. That is why I made reference to this situation in the Dominican Republic.

Here we have in an economic downturn with the stock market plunging, denial from the Government with respect to the situation that we are facing and would face with this economic meltdown. That is a simple example of a situation where a worker who was renting an apartment was laid off, the landlord improving the facility and now the landlord has no income. That would redound to his income generation potential. That is one area.

A large percentage of the female population works in hotels in Tobago. Because of this particular situation, there would be a decline in the tourism

industry and people would feel it in their pockets. The Government must recognize that this situation is developing. If you are planning different scenarios with respect to the price of oil and natural gas and the fall in prices, we are contending that because of mismanagement we are in this position. You have been told not only from the Opposition but also from several quarters in terms of your budgetary allocation of that US \$70 a barrel oil price on which you placed your budget. When you budget at US \$70 a barrel, we would get nothing in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund.

Do not beat your chest and say that we have one year of import cover which is US \$2 billion in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund. PNM governments before you had more than that. In fact, they had three years import cover. Instead of a mere US \$2 billion in the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, you should have had US \$20 billion.

Sen. Browne: \$3.16 billion.

Sen. Dr. A. Nanan: \$3.16 billion. I am hearing mutterings from that side. We are dealing with a figure of US \$20 billion that should have been in the fund, if there was prudent management.

The Governor of the Central Bank has repeatedly called on the Government to curb excessive spending. The Government is stubborn. It does not listen. That is why the poll is reflecting the view of the public. It is not because we have brainwashed the people. You are disrespecting the public of Trinidad and Tobago with respect to brainwashing the population. You cannot disrespect the population if that is the view of the population with respect to the mismanagement of the economy. The Governor of the Central Bank has had to adjust the repo rate nine times because of the stubbornness of the Government.

By adjusting the repo rate we are seeing a situation with our monthly payment of mortgages. Flexible mortgages are going up. That is hurting the homeowner. It is all because of this Government's mismanagement of the economy and the rising inflation rate.

In terms of the reserve requirement of commercial banks, the Central Bank would cut back and banks would increase their interest rates. You will have a next level that the poor man on the street would have to confront in rising interest rates because of your mismanagement of the economy. The Governor of the Central Bank has warned you several times and you are not heeding the advice. You continue on your merry way to fritter away the patrimony of Trinidad and Tobago.

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In this Motion, not only are we dealing with mismanagement of the economy, but also allegations of corruption. If we are dealing with CEPEP, this is not the Opposition, the Auditor General said that there is a \$1.6 billion discrepancy when CEPEP was under SWMCOL. Now you are going to put CEPEP as a special purpose company. You will get very little transparency, very little probity and no accountability. You are opening areas for more and more corruption in that particular area. That is why we are questioning the special purpose companies especially in times of recession.

The management of these special purpose companies will put a drain on our resources. We are having duplication of resources with respect to these special purpose companies and the Public Service Commission. We are having a parallel public service commission with respect to these special purpose companies. From 2004 to present, you have brought no procurement legislation to deal with this particular issue. When we deal with these state companies we have to ask several questions. In terms of transfers and subsidies, these state companies are over \$8 billion in financial allocations for 2008. We are not talking about millions, but billions to these state companies and there is no accountability. We said that mismanagement of the economy is one area, but there are allegations of corruption in all these various areas.

Many may ask several questions if you are dealing with matters of corruption on certain issues. We have to ask the current Prime Minister—one may wonder if we have a forensic investigation into the education of his children what would turn up. We are asking several questions. What has happened with respect to the discrepancy of \$1.6 billion in the Auditor General's Report? Has the Government addressed this particular issue? [*Interruption*] I will continue to speak because this particular Motion is very relevant to how we are today.

We have fallen on the corruption index. We are very low in terms of a place to live and life expectancy when we are compared globally. We have a situation where the Minister of National Security was given \$4.6 billion in 2008 and \$4.7 billion coming in 2009, and all we saw was the new initiative of the Crime Academy by the Special Anti Crime Unit. Murders are 488 and climbing. We have no confidence in the Minister of National Security because all we get from the Minister of National Security are excuses. When people look in the sky they are wondering where is the blimp. In terms of mismanagement by the Government, where is the blimp? Millions were spent on that air ship. I do not know if it is to

spy on the Opposition. Of course, our strategies are so well hidden that even your air ship cannot detect our plans in our political party. We have to ask several questions in terms of the situation with national security and mismanagement.

If you look at the figure you would see that it is over \$200 billion this Government has spent. If you look at what we get in terms of value for money, several questions remain unanswered. When we look at the downturn in the economy in terms of these mega projects of the Government as the Hyatt Regency Hotel, what would happen to all these hotel rooms?

Someone drew this to my attention and I need to put it in the context of what will happen. In the manufacturing sector and the EPA, we will become less and less competitive in terms of the European market. As our manufacturing sector shrinks, we would have a situation of job loss in that sector. There may also be a situation where large countries like China that has lost its market in the United States would look to other countries to get markets. Our Bureau of Standards and various agencies must be up to par especially when labour is cheap from countries like China and much material would be coming in.

We may need to look at the tax system in our country and utilize that tax regime to keep our people in business and buy local. What will happen to the furniture manufacturers in our country if prefabricated material is coming in from China at a lower price? People would buy that. What would happen to the people who are utilizing the furniture industry as a livelihood? All those factors must be considered by the Government. It must not only be expanding the CEPEP and URP programmes but also to look at the various areas. People would be out of jobs.

People are losing jobs in the United States by the thousands on a daily basis. That is how dire the situation is there. If you take a survey in terms of loss of jobs you would see that the unemployment rate is climbing. As the economic downturn takes effect, there are several reports by businessmen of a drop in sales by 40 to 50 per cent as we approach the Christmas period. All these factors which are important and are now plaguing our twin-island republic have been brought about by mismanagement of the economy. When the price of oil was US \$147 a barrel and before that, the Government had much money to spend.

4.00 p.m.

I want to ask the Government, with respect to the new projects, will the Mamoral Dam be constructed? There was an allocation in last year's and this year's budget, but I am sure that the Minister of Planning and Development would have crossed that out.

Sen. Dr. Dick-Forde: There is no Minister of Planning and Development.

Sen. Dr. A. Nanan: I am hearing from a Minister who has been told that that particular Minister is an uninspired Minister by a Member of their own party. I do not want to deal with that particular matter in terms of the actual Ministry. An uninspired Minister will not get any comment from me.

I am dealing with a matter and whether it is Planning and Development or not, I will get to the issue. If you want to quibble about the name of a Ministry and do not recognize that you have mismanaged the economy and do not recognize the failure of that particular Minister—we are dealing with the matter of housing, environment and the entire gamut with respect to that particular situation. We have been told by the public that the Government has failed in terms of providing, first, security and now preventing flooding in Trinidad and Tobago.

As I deal with the administration complexes, I want to deal with the Estate Management Development Company because it utilized \$1.3 billion to deliver plots of land to ex-workers of Caroni (1975) Limited and to date we have not seen one plot of land being handed out. We may need a commission of enquiry into this particular company and the Palo Seco Agricultural Estates Limited (PSAEL), which name suggests that it deals with agriculture but which has been building drains.

In terms of the mismanagement of the economy and these special purpose companies, there are several reports of over-pricing, especially in the rural communities, where millions of dollars are being spent and there is very little quality being obtained in terms of the infrastructure that has been put down.

In the area of allegations of corruption—I am switching from mismanagement of the economy to allegations of corruption, Mr. President—several questions arise in terms of the matter of Andre Monteil. I want to quote from a news release by the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Basdeo Panday:

“Monteil makes \$20M profit in ‘fire sale’

‘PNM ex-Treasurer Andre Monteil has not only escaped with his unethical purchase of Home Mortgage Bank shares, but false promises from the Prime Minister and collusion with his friend and business associate Calder Hart has earned Mr. Monteil \$20 million in profit at a time when we would more than likely have lost money from those shares than earned,’ Leader of the Opposition Basdeo Panday has said.

Last week the National Insurance Board (NIB) headed by Mr. Hart repurchased a 43.5 per cent block of HMB shares from Stone Street Capital, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Monteil, at a cost of \$130 million—\$20 million more than Mr. Monteil paid for the shares one-and-a-half years ago when he was sitting as chairman of HMB, a public-purpose company.

According to Mr. Panday: ‘In March 2007, Mr. Monteil’s company, Stone Street Capital, bought the HMB shares for \$110 million while Mr. Monteil was chairman of HMB. In August 2007, the Prime Minister told the Parliament the government would take steps to ensure that the shares are re-transferred at the same price of \$110 million that Mr. Monteil paid for them.’”

The date of this release was Monday, November 24, 2008.

“One year has passed since the Prime Minister’s statement. Mr. Monteil has been in possession of and profiting from his ownership of those shares for 18 months. There has been no action by the government as promised by the Prime Minister to correct this act of insider trading or to have Mr. Monteil return the shares for the same \$110 million.

What is worse is that there is a global credit crunch. Economies around the world are collapsing and it started with organizations involved in the business of mortgages. The Prime Minister yesterday announced a slowdown in government housing projects because of the need to cut spending and because mortgage rates are likely to increase beyond what the population can afford to pay. In other words there will be a slowdown in the home-ownership market and slowdown of business of the HMB.

In this scenario, it is highly probable that the HMB shares would begin to fall in value. But what happened is that Mr. Monteil’s friend who is his associate from Home Construction Limited and who served on several other boards with Mr. Monteil when Mr. Monteil was the treasurer of the PNM, Mr. Hart, bails out Mr. Monteil by purchasing the shares for \$20 million more than Mr. Monteil purchased them giving Mr. Monteil a guaranteed \$20 million profit.

It is like a fire sale but instead of the goods going cheaply, they went for \$20 million more, and Mr. Hart did this with taxpayers’ money that he is supposed to be holding on trust for the poor and the needy who depend on the National Insurance Board. That \$20 million could have been used to increase NIS benefits or save for the hard times ahead when government will have to cut its social welfare programmes.

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I think that the public would be very interested in finding out how the NIB decided to purchase these shares from Mr. Monteil and how they came to that price.'

Mr. Panday said there are several instances where Mr. Hart has shown no regard for the public's welfare and appear to breach his fiduciary responsibility as a trustee of the public's interests. He said in those circumstances, it is suspicious that Mr. Hart remains in control of over \$50 billion of taxpayers' money.

The Couva North MP also calls on the Government to expedite legislation to prevent insider trading noting that there are several other instances of private individuals profiting from the manipulating of share trading in state-owned companies."

Allegations of corruption, Mr. President. I was dealing with the issue of the Mamoral Dam. Will that dam be considered a new project and will the Government continue the project which is of great importance and significance to the people of Caparo and the environs? We heard of the belt-tightening exercise and that Ministers would be going to their Ministries to revise their budgets. That particular dam may be off the cards.

We need to hear from the Government what will happen to the dam. The people of Caparo are waiting with bated breath. It is again mismanagement of the economy because this project should have been constructed already, but has been postponed and postponed. This is just like the Government promising 600 early childhood care and education centres and only delivering 19. At the rate the Government is constructing these centres, it could take 100 years to fulfil that particular promise.

May I remind the Government that the UNC administration under the political leader and then Prime Minister Basdeo Panday constructed those early childhood care and education centres for a mere \$250,000 and even up to \$400,000 and now the price under the PNM has gone to as much as \$20 million. I am sure that somebody in the Government would say that these particular early childhood care and education centres were badly designed, which is far from the truth. *[Interruption]* I am hearing asides. Those centres were constructed in 1995 or 1996. You are looking at a 10- to 12-year time span. They are in need of repairs in some areas, I agree, but they have been utilized, unlike the Brian Lara Stadium that we continue to wait on.

I heard the Minister in the Ministry of Finance say that we have spent \$600 million on that project and that it would be a waste to stop it when \$200 million more is required, so that it will continue. That is the question on everybody's mind. What is the Government's policy with respect to projects that are taking large amounts of capital? The sum of \$200 million is not \$200,000; it is a large allocation.

You know, Mr. President, the \$6 billion that the Government is talking about in terms of the loss of revenue is only a small part. When we look at the ripple effect of this economic meltdown, it will have a greater impact than the \$6 billion. That is with respect to the Government, but the man-in-the-street is going to feel the impact or is already doing so with respect to rising inflation rates and the minimum wage. What will happen when workers and unions go up in arms that no one should be touched? Sooner or later we will have to face reality in terms of what will happen to workers across the board.

We have to ask the question in terms of our recurrent expenditure: Can the Government meet the recurrent expenditure bill for the 2009 financial year if the price of oil and the price of natural gas continue to fall? When looking at the budget estimates, I saw an allocation to build a substation for the Essar Steel Plant. Is that still going on? They are also running very high voltage lines from Reform to this particular steel plant. We have to ask if this is still going on because Mittal Steel has stopped its project in terms of expansion of steel plants in other countries.

4.15 p.m.

With the price of ammonia falling, the Government also needs to clear the air. Yes, you are doing maintenance during this period, but the price of ammonia is falling. What is also interesting is that the aluminium complex that is being built or is planned to be built in Wallerfield, what will happen? It is supposed to supply aluminium parts to the motor car industry. We are seeing in the United States that almost 700 dealerships are on the verge of or have already been closed, with respect to the sale of motor cars. What is going to happen? Would the local market be part of the aluminium drive? What are you going to export? There is the situation where there is a crisis in the motor car industry. With respect to the aluminium complex you may have to rethink that particular project in Wallerfield. If you are looking at that project, you may also have to rethink the situation with the aluminium smelter, Alutrint, in Union, as these prices continue to fall.

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In fact, this is the reason you may need to look at it again, in terms of this particular project. If you weigh the benefits, advantages and disadvantages, you would see that the disadvantages far outweigh the advantages.

Do not think because the Prime Minister said yes, we are going ahead with the Otaheiti Island—that is madness, as far as I am concerned. I am not saying the Prime Minister is mad. I said that idea is mad, but it may be concocted by a mind bordering on that particular situation. We have to face reality. Reality is when these Ministers have to review, the first person that should be on call is the people. These large projects that you are contemplating should be weighed in terms of the benefits to the citizens. These are the people that matter.

When you look at the Minister of National Security you spent \$4.7 billion last year and intend to spend another \$4 billion; a total failure. I do not want to say the Minister is a total failure, but everything points to the Minister being a total failure. Another poll might show that the Minister might be a total failure.

I want the Government to be aware that David Thompson's Cabinet is being reshuffled as we speak. You may also be in a situation where there might be reshuffling of portfolios in that particular Cabinet. Do not hug on to your portfolio as has the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs who has been saying: I am not going to cut this and I am not going to cut that. That particular Minister might not be the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs; it might be the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. Minister Enill might be the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs; we do not know. I am not the Prime Minister, I am speculating. In fact, if Minister Enill becomes the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs, that would be a very good thing, because that social sector is one of the most important ministries right now in this economic downturn. That is an area of the social sector. I want to put the Government on notice in this economic downturn. Yes, you are tightening your belt, but where?

We looked at the Government going to a retreat in Petrotrin. We have to ask several questions. Why Petrotrin? What happened to Beach Camp? Millions were spent down there to develop that facility. I have a report from there that everything has been stolen. The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries needs to have to an enquiry, through the Petrotrin board, about the allocation that was spent there and what has happened to the things that were purchased for down there. Everything has been stolen, so they cannot go back to Beach Camp, unless they spend millions again. It is a complete wanton wastage and mismanagement.

The taxpayers have to pay \$891 million, because Treasury Bonds were issued in July. The taxpayers must bear this because of the mismanagement of the Government issuing Treasury Bonds and because of the inflation rate that is spiralling and overheating the economy. That is a burden on the taxpayer. The Government has positioned itself in this particular situation.

In terms of the situation, as we deal with some other areas on mismanagement, mention was made of the Scarborough Hospital. I want to talk about the Point Fortin Hospital. Will that be a priority? Will that be cut? I do not know. They are saying if the project has not been started, it may not start. Point Fortin Hospital may be off the cards.

The Burns Unit—I see the Minister of Health is beating his chest about a \$5 million ward, but \$5 million in these times? We are looking at an early childhood care and education centre being constructed for \$20 million. We have to ask the question: With respect to the Oncology Centre, is the Government still going with the equipment that they were initially supposed to put in this centre? Are we going to get the high-end deal, with respect to linear accelerators for cancer treatment, or are we going back to the cohort machines that we have had before, because of the situation that you are cutting? We do not want health to be sacrificed on the altar by the Government, in terms of health requirements. With respect to the Oncology Centre, it has been over six or seven years, under the PNM and there has been no oncology centre. Millions were spent there. I think \$182 million have been spent on that particular project and nothing. Grass is growing in the area designated for that particular oncology centre.

The people in Scarborough are renovating a hospital that does not exist. Two health centres were supposed to have been constructed. The UNC administration built four and left two for the PNM Government to construct and they have constructed none. Will that be part of the cutting back?

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of the hon. Senator has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. W. Mark*]

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Dr. A. Nanan: Thank you, Mr. President and I thank all Senators. As I was dealing with health, I want to deal with CDAP because that is another area where there is total mismanagement in that particular sector by the Ministry of

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Health. I made reference to the programme and the drugs in that particular programme, in terms of the generic nature. We have to face facts, in terms of bioavailability and efficacy. Those are the two areas, in terms of the nature of a drug. Many people are being turned away from the programme. It is a good programme because it is beneficial to many of our citizens who have that need. They are turning away because it has a detrimental effect instead of a positive effect, because the drugs are dealing with chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and glaucoma.

As I am speaking about glaucoma, I want the Minister of Health to recognize that they keep switching the brands with respect to the treatment of glaucoma. You have to be very careful in what you are doing there, because we are dealing with pressures in the eye which is very sensitive to high blood pressure. One person may be utilizing a specific brand of eye drop and suddenly changes. We would have a situation because of the quick change or the unavailability of that particular brand. I do not know if the Government is trying to give all manufacturers—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Narace: Could you tell us the names of the drugs you are actually speaking about?

Sen. Dr. A. Nanan: You want me to call all of them now, Minister? [*Interruption*]

Sen. Narace: The ones with the glaucoma and the switching. Let us start with that, but all will help, certainly.

Sen. Dr. A. Nanan: I am staying on corruption and mismanagement. I do not want to go into—Mr. President, I do not want to beat my chest and say anything, but I do not know if the Minister of Health is aware that I am also a pharmacist, so I could call every drug on the pharmacy shelf from A to Z and every single one of those drugs on the—I do not want to do that. Because—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Narace: Seriously, if there is a concern from the distinguished Senator, I want the names, so that I would certainly look into it and check and see if there is any validity to what you are saying, because we are indeed engaged in an exercise that is not just looking at the efficiency and the efficacy of that programme, but the efficacy of the drugs involved. Therefore, I would be more than happy to receive from you any information that could assist us in that exercise.

Sen. Dr. A. Nanan: I would write the Minister formally. Before I do so, I want to deal with the drug, Timolol Maleate and the brand is Timoptic. I am sure the Minister is aware of that. That is only one. I do not want to call the others. We

have to look at the prices. I could deal on a one-on-one basis with that. Minister of Health, what is happening is when the patients cannot get the availability of the drug in the hospital or the dispensary, they have to purchase it outside. I do not know if you recognize that these drugs for glaucoma start at \$180 to \$210 for a bottle of eye drop, which is way above anybody's—and they have to buy them on a monthly basis.

I also want you to address the situation with diabetes. The needles cost \$1.40 for one. I think you used to give—you had a restriction on needles and you have expanded that, in terms of giving them 30 needles per month.

Insulin is another high—in terms of Humulin R and N; those different brands. It is very expensive. If they do not have it in supply, the patients who have to buy it outside cannot afford it. These are life-threatening situations where they can go into diabetic coma almost without having that dosage in the morning, evening or twice daily. Those are two, in terms of treatment of insulin and glaucoma.

The areas I would deal with are in terms of the drugs. Again, you have to be very careful of health. That is why we talked about Food and Drug Regulations.

Sen. Narace: I think you are speaking about efficiency, efficacy and availability, but you are not necessarily speaking about corruption; not that there may or may not be, we do not know. For purposes of the efficiency, efficacy and availability, because you spoke about insulin not being available and needles, could you be specific, in terms of whether it is an efficiency problem or a corruption problem and if so, could you support it so that we can really look into it?

Sen. Dr. A. Nanan: I talked about efficacy and bioavailability of the drug. If you take a simple drug for high blood pressure, there are generics on the market if Food and Drug did their work, you would see it in terms of bioavailability and efficacy. Drugs that are brand name have therapeutic effects. When you take medication you are trying to—*[Interruption]*

Sen. Narace: Give us the name of the drug before we discuss it so that we could take some notes. What drugs are we speaking about?

Sen. Dr. A. Nanan: I spoke about Timoptic, Humulin N and R. They are also related because when you get high blood pressure you would also get glaucoma.

So, glaucoma is actually the increase in pressure in the eye and you did not know that. They are all related. So, if you want a lecture in clinical medicine, I am going to give you that as another area.

4.30 p.m.

Sen. Narace: Senator, very seriously. All I am saying is that when you are dealing with issues, you are dealing with glaucoma and you did call the name of that drug. When we were dealing with blood pressure, and you were challenging the drug, if you could call the name of it we are really going to look into it.

Sen. Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. President, may I suggest that the Minister give me the green sheet with all the CDAP medication and I am going to tick off for him the ones that I find that the efficacy is not there. There is a whole listing. A lot of statins are utilized in the blood pressure medication.

Mr. President, when I was a pharmacist—this is going to take us back a long way—when one looks at the drugs that were on the market then, there are many of them that are still on the market now, but what has happened is that the brand has changed, but the drug itself remains, so, the effect is still the same.

With respect to asthma, in terms of ventolin and biotype inhalers, again there is a shortage there. There is a shortage in terms of if a patient needs—

Mr. President: Senator, we are at the tea break, but we had a little understanding that you were going to be brief, and you were going to cut yourself short of the one hour to allow Sen. Seetahal SC to speak before we went to the tea break. Are you going to exhaust your entire hour? We had a little understanding, and I am willing to let this matter go on, but we did have a little understanding. Some of us are not able to just leave to relieve ourselves, so please bear that in mind.

Sen. Dr. A. Nanan: Mr. President, I apologize to the Senate with respect to this particular matter. This is a matter that is dear to my heart, because I see patients on a regular basis suffering and they cannot really afford medication. I would very well like to continue the dialogue with the Minister of Health, so that we could bring some kind of beneficial effect to the programme.

With respect to the Motion, I fully support the Motion brought by my colleague, Sen. Wade Mark, with respect to allegations of corruption. We have showed very distinctly and factually that there are allegations of corruption, and because of the mismanagement of the economy, that is why we are in this position where workers' jobs are being threatened on a daily basis.

Mr. President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dana Seetahal SC: Mr. President, thank you. The Motion before us assumes that there are allegations of widespread corruption and mismanagement; there are allegations of a lack of transparency; and then we have the resolution.

Mr. President, if one has been reading the newspapers as I have in the last few days and I am sure many others, one would have seen reports that the popularity of the Government of the day is falling and the popularity of the leader of the party is at an all time low. It would appear from the questions asked and answered that there is a perception, not necessarily in my view, that there is not any widespread corruption, but there is also mismanagement of the money spent by the Government. There is a perception that this is so. There is at some level an appreciation that there is some level of corruption.

The hon. Prime Minister, himself, by referring the Cleaver Heights Project to a commission of enquiry, seems to be suggesting that there is some basis for a suggestion of corruption. He seems to be suggesting that because he indicated that not only is \$10 million that he had first spoken about “missing”, but there might well be \$20 million and that there has been overspending in that project. So, from within the bowels of the Government, at the very top, there is the suggestion that there is corruption. They may be wrong, but there is the suggestion. If it is that this is coming from within the Government that is ruling then there is this suggestion and it is really a declaration against the interest of the Government to suggest that there is corruption within Government projects. So, if they are making this declaration against their own interest, one would be constrained to believe that this is so. In other words, or put another way, I would not likely admit that I am guilty of a criminal offence, because it is not a declaration in my favour. So, it must be that it is more likely than not, unless I am out of my mind.

Now, that being so, one has to look at other allegations of overspending if one is to use that as a yardstick. There have been many statements in the public domain and many suggestions as to what is happening with respect to the Brian Lara Stadium at Tarouba, and that the money spent is now more than doubled what was originally allocated. If one is to use as a yardstick that overspending means corruption then there is, in my view, something to suggest that there is corruption.

Mr. President, in the last year, we have heard much about UDeCott and we all know they are to go before a commission of enquiry in January. If one follows the history of what has been happening there, one will appreciate that people in the country feel that there is something going on in that company which controls so many projects in Trinidad and Tobago that is not right.

The point is we do not know enough. There is not enough transparency, as it were, which is one of the assumptions in this Motion. To have to wait another year until we know is just not right. At this time, with the world economy as it is and with our situation as it is, finally the Minister of Finance has to agree that we need to review our budget after she has defended it time and time again. We would like to know what is happening with all the moneys in these projects; how far we have gone over budget; and what has been accomplished. At this point in time, if we have to band our bellies, we want to know that the projects that we, the taxpayers, are putting our money in and our national patrimony is going toward, that there is no mismanagement in those projects.

Insofar as management or mismanagement of the money in the country is concerned, I also heard the hon. Prime Minister say that CEPEP and URP are to continue. We all know that for the last few years these two programmes in this country have cost the country billions of dollars. What are they about? In general terms, CEPEP is supposed to look after the greenery of the country and the roads. When we go to Mayaro we see nice little green areas and also all along the bus route. URP is supposed to be responsible for projects. When we have floods of the kind that we have, people are saying that it has to do with people not appreciating properly what vegetation you must leave. In court, we are seeing murders resulting from competition in URP for contracts and all of that like. It must be that we need to find out what actually is going on in these projects because, in my view, there must be something seriously wrong especially with the URP project.

The Government of the day has said that it would not close down URP. I have stood here before and asked that it be closed down because, in my view, it breeds criminals. I have spoken to people employed in URP and even those persons have said that it should be closed down.

One such person tells me that he earns a certain amount of money. He does not work, but he signs on and he must give one quarter of that money to the person who authorizes his payments. This is going on all the time. I do not know if Members of the Government are not aware of these things. It is current, it continues and nothing is changing. If a man like Mark Guerra was in charge of one division of URP and had vehicles and property and so on—that man was a criminal, a well-known criminal—then what is happening with these kinds of projects? Why are they allowed to continue without proper accountability?

For CEPEP, I feel more sympathy. I have actually seen some signs that the CEPEP workers are trying to work. I do think that they are not properly managed

as they should be or utilized in the right way. There are many areas such as the beaches in Mayaro where their talents could be used and also in other areas. They are sometimes put to clean the streets and the next week the road is dug up, so all their work would have gone in vain. That is what I meant; that kind of mismanagement.

Insofar as the lack of transparency is concerned, I come back to something that I have talked about before and I am going to repeat it—lack of transparency in terms of how SAUTT operates and how the Trilogue System operates. That is the word that I have been hearing about recently on TV6. We all know that system monitors individuals. How is it operating in this country to monitor persons? Who are the persons being monitored?

Now, one would say that surely those are matters of national security, and one would expect little transparency there, but that could always be an excuse for everything. The transparency that we demand is that SAUTT be legalized and that there be a system in the legislation for recruitment, for the powers, for everything that they have.

Most importantly, if we are going to use equipment to monitor individuals, we want to know the purpose. In other countries, what do they use it for? In the United Kingdom, individuals are monitored and the result is that you have evidence in court that is being used to convict criminals. The result is that you protect the national security, and that you can focus on who are the terrorists. In this country, there is no wiretapping legislation; there is no legislation allowing this to happen. I have raised this matter before, as the Minister of National Security would say, several times, and it is falling on deaf ears.

Mr. President, until we put legislation in place, crime in this country will continue and the detection rate would fall because we are relying on individuals to give evidence and every day they change their minds, especially if one gang meets up with another gang.

Presently, there is probably evidence available on kidnappings in this country which cannot be utilized. If you have to use that evidence in court, not only would it have been illegally obtained, but you would have to reveal the source of that evidence. Until such time as we put legislation in place, it is going to continue. To my certain knowledge, this has gone on for three years; the availability of the evidence, and not being able to utilize it. When people talk about crime escalating, it is escalating because we are not able to utilize all the resources that we have to detect crime and to prosecute successfully these offences. That is what

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I mean when I talk about the combination of the lack of transparency of the utilization of the money and to also accounting. We have this money and we are doing certain things, but why is it not accomplishing what we say that it will and should accomplish?

In terms of this last point, "*Be it resolved* that this Senate call on the Government to account for the manner in which it has conducted the financial affairs and for its failure to take corrective action", that is in respect of all of the points.

4.45 p.m.

They are very serious points, but I have made them in a quick fashion, because I think some of these have been said before, but they probably need to be reiterated in Parliament. I do think if one takes a cursory look at the letters to the editor every day, one would see dissatisfaction of the average citizen, as to, for example, what people perceive as the deceit of the Ministry of Finance, in telling us do not worry about the United States situation, it will not affect us and having to come back in two months. All of the excuses given are not acceptable.

The average man in the street is sensible. He can look at television and understand that something like that must affect us, and when you have people saying, no, no, it would not, and then you come around in two months, how can people have confidence in what you are saying and believe what you are saying later on? How can people have confidence that what you are saying is something that we should accept?

Sen. Narace: May I? Thank you very much, Senator. I notice that sentiment coming through as if the Ministers of Finance had said something different and now they are saying something different. That is not so. They did say that there could be some level of contagion, but they did not say we would not be affected at all. At no point did I hear them say that, but a common sentiment. It might not be your fault, through you, Mr. President, it may be that the media brought it or some letters or so, but certainly, I do not think that is the message that they gave.

Sen. D. Seetahal SC: Thank you very much, Mr. President. I did not stand by the Standing Orders. That is not quite a point of order. What the Minister is attempting to do is to explain the situation from the Government's point of view. I have heard the explanation; I listened to 95.5 on Friday; I do follow it up and other people do. I am saying there is this perception, this is what people are saying and this is what you have in the papers.

You have people writing those things and my point is there must be greater accountability for that, rather than having one person give an explanation, and recurrently throughout that interview for an hour, laughing away about matters that are serious. This is what I heard with my own ears, a Member of Government laughing away about all of the questions that have been posed. People expect more. People have memories; they remembered what happen in 1973—I do; in 1985. They remember other times when downtown was demolished, so to speak, in 1990, and now there is a threat.

So, we want more assurance; we want something; we want to be able to depend on the word of the Ministers and Members of Government when they say we are going to bring this legislation, we are going to ensure that we use what we have to fight crime, to detect crime; we are telling you that, okay, we did not want to make you worry too early but this is the situation; something like that, but I am not hearing anything.

I am hearing, and like many people, what appears to be, to me, excuses and not coming clean and straight. That is what I am saying; we need to have greater accountability. [*Desk thumping*] I support the resolution in that regard, and in particular in terms of the points that I made.

Mr. President, thank you very much.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Conrad Enill): Mr. President, under normal conditions I would respond to that, but on this occasion, I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, December 02, 2008 at 1.30 p.m., where we will discuss and debate the Financial Institutions Bill, which we indicated on the last occasion.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.50 p.m.