

SENATE

Tuesday, June 25, 2019

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Madam President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Dennis Moses who is out of the country. I have not yet received the Instrument of Appointment so that when I do I will ask to revert to this item on the Order Paper.

VISITORS**Bethesda Government Primary School of Tobago**

Madam President: May I also welcome, today, the students of the Bethesda Government Primary School of Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

PAPERS LAID

1. Consolidated Audited Financial Statements of the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (UDeCOTT) for the financial year ended December 31, 2009. [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Allyson West)*]
2. Consolidated Audited Financial Statements of the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (UDeCOTT) for the financial year ended December 31, 2010. [*Sen. The Hon. A. West*]
3. Consolidated Audited Financial Statements of the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (UDeCOTT) for the financial year ended December 31, 2011. [*Sen. The Hon. A. West*]
4. Consolidated Audited Financial Statements of the Urban Development

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- Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (UDeCOTT) for the financial year ended December 31, 2012. [*Sen. The Hon. A. West*]
5. Consolidated Audited Financial Statements of the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (UDeCOTT) for the financial year ended December 31, 2013. [*Sen. The Hon. A. West*]
 6. Consolidated Audited Financial Statements of the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (UDeCOTT) for the financial year ended December 31, 2014. [*Sen. The Hon. A. West*]
 7. Consolidated Audited Financial Statements of the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (UDeCOTT) for the financial year ended December 31, 2015. [*Sen. The Hon. A. West*]
 8. Consolidated Audited Financial Statements of National Flour Mills Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2018. [*Sen. The Hon. A. West*]

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan): Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, the Government is pleased to announce that it will be answering questions Nos. 186, 187 and 261. We ask for a two-week deferral of the following: question No. 198, question No. 259, question No. 273.

We also would like to inform this honourable Senate that under Written Questions, even though it is not due as yet, we will be submitting the answer to question No. 296.

Hon. Senator: Two what?

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: 2-9-6.

Madam President: Sen. Mark. Yes.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, having regard to the fact that Parliament is going

to recess at the end of the first week in July and you having approved, that is the President, these questions for all these months, I find it very difficult to accept—

Madam President: You are not asking me a question, Sen. Mark. I thought you wanted clarification on something.

Sen. Mark: Yeah, I want clarification on this question about deferring questions after questions after questions. And I think that you have to rule on this matter having regard.

Madam President: Sen. Mark, as you very well—well, as you should be aware the questions that are due for answer I can defer them for 14 days under the Standing Orders. Remember there is a time after the recess when the Session will still be alive so that, you know, it is completely within the Standing Orders to allow the extension.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

Farmers' Market Compound

(Details of)

296. Sen. Saddam Hosein asked the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries:

Having regard to the use of the Ministry's compound for the Farmers' Market, can the Minister provide a detailed breakdown of the following:

- (i) the cost of the tents used for the Farmers' Market;
- (ii) the number of times the tents were rented for said event;
- (iii) the name of the company/person that provides said tents;
- (iv) the procurement process used to select the company/person to provide the tents;
- (iv) the date on which the contract was entered into with the tent provider and the duration of same; and

- (v) the amount of money paid by the Ministry to the company/person for the provision of tents?

Vide end of sitting for written answer.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

Boeing 737 Max 8 Jets

(Purchase of)

- 198.** In light of the fatal crash of an Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 737 Max 8 Jet, can the Minister of Works and Transport advise as to whether Caribbean Airlines will be proceeding with the purchase of the twelve (12) Boeing 737 Max 8 Jets currently on order? [*Sen. W. Mark*]

Venezuelan Nationals

(Number of Incarcerated/Detained)

- 259.** Can the hon. Minister of National Security advise as to the number of Venezuelan nationals who are incarcerated/detained in our nation's prisons as at April 15, 2019? [*Sen. T. Obika*]

Immigration Detention Centre

(Details of Detainees)

- 273.** As regard persons detained at the Immigration Detention Centre, as at April 30, 2019, can the hon. Minister of National Security provide the following:
- (i) the number of detainees at the facility;
 - (ii) the nationalities of the detainees referred to in (i); and a breakdown by percentage of the nationalities referred to in (ii)? [*Sen. P. Richards*]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

Sangre Grande Main Road Traffic

(Measures to Address)

186. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

In light of recent reports of increased traffic congestion along the Sangre Grande Main Road, can the Minister indicate what is being done to address this problem?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):

Thank you, thank you, Madam President. Madam President, this question startled me, because I have heard so much about a highway from Wallerfield to Sangre Grande, that we were building it in the bush and all kind of thing. Why we are wasting money to build a highway? Madam President, we are building a highway to Sangre Grande simply because the demand on the Eastern Main Road exceeds the supply and there is very little that can be done to improve capacity in this area. However, until that highway to Sangre Grande is completed, the Traffic Management Branch of the Ministry is liaising with the TTPS and the municipal police in the area to improve enforcement of “indiscrimatory” parking, loading and offloading of goods vehicles, illegal vending.

Furthermore, the PURE Unit and NIDCO are engaged in the infrastructure project at present that will assist the mobility in the Sangre Grande area and environment. People in the eastern seaboard cannot wait for that highway to reach to Sangre Grande. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: Sen. Mark.

Sen. Mark: The value of this highway I understand is \$400 million. [*Crosstalk*] Can you tell us when you expect it to be completed?

Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan: Madam President, again, the astute leadership of the hon. Dr. Keith Rowley, segments of this highway will be delivered to the people of the eastern seaboard sometime next year. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Mark.

Sen. Mark: Having regard to the fact that squatters have begun to construct in the pathway of this highway, can you tell this Senate what action is the Government taking to address this matter to avoid any untimely delays?

Madam President: Sen. Mark, I would not allow that question. Next question. Any more questions on this? Okay, next question.

Dilapidated Diamond Village Community Centre

(Measures to Address)

187. Sen. Wade Mark asked the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts:

Given reports of the dilapidated condition of the Diamond Village Community Centre as well as its lack of security, can the Minister indicate what is being done to address the issues affecting the Centre?

The Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts (Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly): Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, the Diamond Village Community Centre is not currently on the list of community centres for repairs in fiscal 2019. However, the Ministry will assess the conditions of the centre and make recommendations for the necessary remedial work to be completed as soon as it is practicable.

Madam President: Sen. Mark.

Sen. Mark: Madam President, is the Minister aware that the centre is now the homes to rats and snakes and roaches and insects. [*Crosstalk*] Are you aware—do not allow Minister Young to come in here and disturb the proceedings.

Sen. Baptiste-Primus: Wade, remember there are children in the Senate.

Sen. Mark: Yeah, but do not allow him to—

Madam President: Sen. Mark, please ask your question.

Sen. Mark: Yes. I am hearing him mumbling whilst I am asking my question.

Madam President: I am hearing a lot of mumbling as well. Could you please ask your question?

Sen. Mark: I am asking, Madam President, through you, whether the Minister is aware that the centre, which is under some review as it is claimed, is now the home to rats and snakes and roaches and insects.

Madam President: Minister—

Sen. Mark: And whether—

Madam President: No that is one question. Minister.

Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam President, thank you. It seems as though the Member is well acquainted with rats and snakes and cockroaches much more than I am. [*Laughter*] However I am not uniquely aware that the centre is inhabited by those, although we have quite a few dilapidated centres around the country and it may well be that the centre may be home to vermin, such as the Member has described.

1.40 p.m.

Madam President: Sen. Mark?

Sen. Mark: Can the Minister indicate why the Government has not taken action to get this centre properly repaired, having regard to the structure? There is a structure already established. Why has the Government not taken action to bring this community centre back to its normal pristine glory and state as it was founded and established earlier?

Madam President: Minister?

Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, it is the wish of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts that we could, at the same time, deal with all of the over 250 centres in the country. However, this is not practicable. At this point in time, Madam Speaker, I am glad

to report that we have been able to do complete construction and major refurbishment in over 30 centres thus far, with 20 more being in the pipeline in various stages of completion.

It all starts with the fact that there is a centre that needs attention and then we assess it in the same way that we have described for the Diamond Village Community Centre and then we get it onto the programme as quickly as possible. So therefore, though we may wish to do all centres—and there are many more that may be in need of attention—we cannot do all at the same time, and certainly, we will do our best to get to Diamond Centre as soon as is practicable. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Mark: When does the Government intend to conduct an assessment of the centre having regard to the period of time it has been placed in the situation that I earlier described?

Madam President: I think that was provided in the initial response of the Minister.

Sen. Mark: Can I ask the Minister whether the centre has been placed in a zone of discrimination insofar as the PNM is concerned and hence the reason why there has been no attention paid to this particular exercise?

Sen. Khan: “Ah know dah is de question yuh wanted tuh ask from de beginning.”

Madam President: Sen. Mark, that question is not allowed. Next question, Sen. Mark.

Sen. Mark: I thought they have deferred 198.

Madam President: Sen. Obika, next question.

Manta Lodge and Sanctuary Villa, Tobago

(Details of Property)

261. Sen. Taharqa Obika asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

As regard the Manta Lodge and Sanctuary Villa properties in Tobago, can the hon. Minister of Finance indicate the following:

- (i) the dates of the acquisition of each property; and
- (ii) the total money spent to acquire and outfit each property?

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Alyson West): Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, the Manta Lodge was acquired on November 19, 2015. The Sanctuary Resort was acquired in two parts. The first part of the property was acquired in November 17, 2015, and the second part was acquired in August 08, 2016. The cost to acquire these properties is as follows: Manta Lodge, TT \$8 million; Sanctuary Resort, TT \$24 million. No funds have been spent to outfit either property. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: Sen. Obika?

Sen. Obika: Thank you very much, Madam President. Can the hon. Minister indicate, having spent in excess of \$30 million just in acquisition, what revenue has accrued from such properties as yet?

Madam President: Minister?

Sen. The Hon. A. West: Madam President, no revenue has been earned today from either property.

Madam President: Sen. Obika?

Sen. Obika: Madam President, can I ask the hon. Minister if any of the properties are in operation at this time?

Madam President: Minister?

Sen. The Hon. A. West: Madam President, neither property is in operation currently.

Madam President: Sen. Obika?

Sen. Obika: Can the hon. Minister indicate if additional moneys are required to

bring the properties into operation?

Madam President: Minister?

Sen. The Hon. A. West: Madam President, the THA is seeking operators for these properties. As and when those operators are identified and arrangements finalized, a determination will be made as to whether it needs to incur any more money and how much will have to be incurred.

Madam President: Sen. Obika?

Sen. Obika: Given the importance of tourism to the economy of Tobago, can the hon. Minister indicate a timeline as to when the THA should acquire such operators?

Madam President: Minister?

Sen. The Hon. A. West: Madam President, the THA is working assiduously on these matters and is trying to conclude this as soon as possible.

GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO ADDRESS CRIME

Sen. Taharqa Obika: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Madam President. I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas the responsibility of a Government is to ensure public safety and security through the maintenance of law and order;

And whereas the Government has failed to address the extraordinary increase in the level of crime in Trinidad and Tobago, in particular murders and other violent crimes, which are negatively affecting national peace and economic development;

Be it resolved that the Senate take note of the Government's failure to arrest the increasing and unacceptable levels of criminal activity in Trinidad and Tobago;

And be it further resolved that this Senate call on the Government to table, in the shortest possible time a cogent Strategic Crime Prevention Plan to address the unacceptable levels of crime facing the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.

Now, to begin my contribution, Madam President, I wish to go straight to the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. And if we turn to the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago under Rights Enshrined, Chapter 1 of the Constitution: "The Recognition and Protection of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms", there are some rights enshrined there, section 4, and these rights enshrined are critical to an analysis of the impact of crime in our country and how it prevents persons from exercising their rights as citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Because the first:

"It is hereby recognised and declared that in Trinidad and Tobago there have existed and shall continue to exist, without discrimination by reason of race, origin, colour, religion or sex, the following fundamental human rights and freedoms, namely:

(a) the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law;"

We can all accept that crime touches this first fundamental enshrined right immediately. The right to life can be snuffed out by murder; the right to liberty, the right to security of the person. Then there is another right:

"(b) the right of the individual to equality before the law and protection of the law:"

When we see the bureau within the police service arresting police officers for what

would be fraudulent activity, we understand that if we do not maintain vigilance, we can have this right to protection of the law being further eroded.

- “(c) the right of the individual to respect for his private and family life;
- (d) the right of the individual to equality of treatment from any public authority in the exercise of any functions;
- (f) the right of a parent or guardian”—and this one is very important, Madam President—“to provide a school of his own choice for the education of his child or ward;”

Now, when we consider that there are schools reporting that the level of security has been compromised in some form or the other, and we have the MTS looking at ramping up security around certain schools; talk of relocating schools from certain communities where persons have depended on these schools for generations, simply because of security concerns we can understand that this right of a parent or guardian to provide the school of their own choice is also being eroded:

- “(g) freedom of movement;”

Madam President, we are aware of the borderlines that exist. King Austin, that famous calypsonian from Trinidad and Tobago, his son, Mr. King, sang that song of “Borderline”. You know? And that song of “Borderline” is a reality for persons living in certain communities. We do not have garrison communities here in Trinidad where the borderlines are clearly defined, but we have communities where there are borderlines. And to the persons who can or cannot cross those borderlines, the definition comes when someone is shot after they have crossed such a borderline. So to the young person living on the hill—I do not need to call the name of the hill because we do not want to continue stigmatizing, but we know where we are speaking of—living on the hill and wanting to participate in the City

of Port of Spain, they may have to cross several borderlines, and if they are seen to be connected to someone or some activity, they may find that their life may be taken simply for collateral damage. They may have never been involved in crime. And that is an issue. Freedom of movement is severely affected by crime in this country.

- “(i) freedom of thought and expression...; and
- (k) freedom of the press.”

Now, a simple example: A journalist went on a public road across from a business in South Trinidad and stones were hurled at them. This is in connection with AV Drilling. And you find that these journalists were only doing what is expected of their profession. They were carrying the story of the day that was delegation of corruption regarding reporting of “fiscalized” oil by AV Drilling. And they found that they were under attack by persons who, allegedly, were connected to AV Drilling. The issue is, this may seem as a simple scenario, but can you imagine if every time a journalist goes to report on an issue where someone may be implicated and stones are thrown at them, or bullets—shots—are fired at them, you can imagine that the freedom of the press will be no more.

So I start off on that point. What are the rights of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and what is the impact? This Motion seeks to look at the impact of crime and the failure of the Government to address the issue of crime and criminality, and finally, to have a cogent plan to address the situation. In Trinidad and Tobago, persons have come to a conclusion that we are not safe. Maslow's hierarchy of needs in terms of theory of human behaviour speaks to what are the expectations of a human being, and safety is one of the basic needs of a human being in any society.

The primary requirement at the bottom of such a pyramid for every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago is their safety and security. When people consider as recent as the 3rd of May, 2019, just last month, *Newsday* had to report a schoolgirl being killed in Big Yard in a shootout, we are not safe. When the public considers that this schoolgirl was shot and killed as a result of a shootout, reportedly between police officers and gunmen, it shows that if this report is true, even the police service do not have a handle on the crime situation. It may mean that they are under-resourced. The Police Commissioner is on record as stating the financing that is required for the performance of their duties is not being given to the police officers of Trinidad and Tobago. Give the police service the money they require; the resources they require to do the job that they need. [*Desk thumping*]

So the people are clear under this PNM regime—this particular incarnation—that we are not safe. The media headlines bear the truth. In Trinidad and Tobago today, there is an extraordinary increase in the levels of crime and criminality. Murders and violent crimes are spiralling beyond control. Trinidad and Tobago has known no peace since this regime has come into government.

Madam President, I want to share with you a report regarding the ammunition control practices in Latin America and the Caribbean from the UNLIREC document, 2018. On page 9 of that document—and I quote:

“As per imports, UNCOMTRADE shows that between 2014 and 2016, almost all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (27 nations) imported some ammunition, though many did so at small levels. Nonetheless, the following countries imported (and reported) at least USD1 million in ammunition during the period. Argentina (MUSD 9.5), Brazil (MUSD 21.3), Chile (MUSD 10), Colombia (MUSD 8.4), Costa Rica

(MUSD 2.8), Dominican Republic (MUSD 1.36), Ecuador (MUSD 1.1), El Salvador (MUSD 2), Guatemala (MUSD 7.4) Mexico (MUSD 39.4), Peru (MUSD 4.9), and Uruguay (MUSD 1...6).”

Madam President, missing from that list—from that UN agency—is Venezuela and we may find it difficult to accept that. But we understand how reporting goes, and whilst there may not be a report of imports from Venezuela, it may not mean that there were none. So the report continues, and I quote:

“...in the same period”—that is between 2014 and 2016:

“...in the same period, Venezuela did not report any imports but exports reports from third countries show that Venezuela received at least USD 4 million in ammunition.”

Over TT \$28 million in ammunition Venezuela received in that two-year period. We are not talking about 2019: 2014 to 2016. The situation in Venezuela, as far as security, was not as fluid as it is now. It was tighter, one can assume—one can expect—but right now we can understand, because of the mass exodus, roughly 10 per cent of the population leaving to neighbouring countries, some of which are here with us in Trinidad and Tobago, we can expect that the security situation is not as tight as it was 2014 to 2016. So Venezuela is listed in this 2018 report as reflecting a receipt of US \$4 million in ammunition from the neighbouring countries.

Now, Madam President, the Police Commissioner is on record as expressing concern with regard to the numbers of Venezuelans—not citizens, but the numbers of criminal elements that are hiding among the Venezuelan community. There are honest and decent persons from Venezuela. Trinidad and Tobago has had a wave of immigrants from Venezuela as part of our history, tied to political unrest. This is

a fact of history. But what is a fact of today's story, the period now, is that there are many criminal elements hiding among the persons coming from Venezuela.

So a very important part of the Government's plan must involve how do you treat with the criminal elements from Venezuela? And what the people are saying is that they are not seeing that the Government understands the problem, to begin; if they understand that there is a problem in the first place, they are not addressing the problem, obviously.

The Anti-Gang Bill, Madam President—I want to move on to another aspect of crime in Trinidad and Tobago, the Anti-Gang Bill. Now, the PNM regime would have had the country believe at the beginning of 2018—at the end of 2017—that every crime, every murder, that was committed, the blood is on the hands of the UNC because they did not support the Anti-Gang Bill. They would have had the population believe that. The problem is, the Anti-Gang Bill was passed. The murder rate increased. The statistics that the hon. Attorney General brought to the Parliament bears that truth out. The Anti-Gang Bill, legislation without implementation, is but wasted effort. Madam President, vision without action is but a dream, and when there is action without vision, it is time wasted. What this Government is engaging in is time-wasting when it comes to solving crime and criminality in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, the Minister of National Security, Madam President—I could not believe it when I heard it myself. The Minister of National Security came to this House and on the question of the Anti-Gang Bill volunteered information. The Minister said that he meets with the heads of the national security apparatus every week. At that time there were 23 weeks passed in the year and he only found five persons to be charged. They could have only charged five persons on the Anti-Gang Bill, from

the Minister's own admission. "Ah doh know if da is a taxi gang." You found five fellas in a car and say, "Well, dis is de taxi gang and we lay five charges on you", when this Government is on record as saying they know where the hundreds of gang members are; they know their houses; they know where they live; they know where they lime; they know where they sell their narcotics; they know where they have their guns. But you can only find five charges. "Ah doh know if was five fellas sweating on a corner or five fellas in a taxi." All right? [*Interruption*]

So, Madam President, I am hearing some protests from the Minister of Trade and Industry, and I have a part that affects the Minister of Trade and Industry because we could understand why there is not much economic activity, because crime affects business directly. [*Desk thumping*] Crime affects investment directly. Now, if one turns to the Inter-American Development Bank—because I really want the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry to understand why, when the Minister comes to this Parliament in a budget debate or a mid-year review, cannot account for any increases or any improvement in the real economy, apart from the energy sector. And a significant part of that, one, is lack of ideas with regard to the Cabinet itself, but a significant part of that is the cost of crime and violence.

And the Inter-American Development Bank, in a publication titled: *The Cost of Crime and Violence: New Evidence and Insights in Latin America and the Caribbean*, by Laura Jaitman, as editor, made some pronouncements—I believe this was in 2018. I stand to be corrected—where they estimated the direct cost of crime and violence, and they categorized three types of costs: the social cost of crime, which includes the cost of victimization in terms of quality of life lost due to homicides and other violent crimes and the foregone income of the prison population. Because if you have a prison population of 1,000 or 500 and those

persons are not being able to be productive members of society, then, of course, you lose an opportunity for output. You lose an opportunity to improve your gross domestic product. You lose the skills that those persons have. And then there are many persons on remand, because the criminal justice system has broken down where, if there were speedy trials, they would have gotten their sentencing quicker; they may have spent less time incarcerated or they may have been acquitted earlier; the cost incurred by the private sector, which includes the expenditure of firms and households on crime prevention, namely spending on security services.

Now, Madam President, if you are in the business of distribution, your business is cash-based, you are a low hanging fruit for crime and criminal elements. You may be going well. Your margins may be just enough to pay your rent, pay your workers and give you some basic return on your investment. But the moment you are hit by crime, the amount you have to invest in that very business, it may make it uneconomical to remain in the business in the first place. So the impact on business is significant. And then there is cost incurred by the Government which includes public spending on the Judiciary system, police services and administration of prisons. You cannot put a police in every household.

So there were some statistics regarding income losses due to incarceration, and the total spending was in millions of dollars, and the average for Trinidad and Tobago, if I were to gross this in US, is about TT \$2 million, which is US \$.33 million per annum. I think this is income lost due to incarceration. So this may seem small, because income lost due to incarceration is but a small part of the pie. All right? And income lost due to incarceration as a percent of GDP is projected to be .14 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago. Now, why do I put this type of detailed statistics on the record? Because I am indicating to the Government that unless your solutions

to crime are data-driven, you are but wasting time [*Desk thumping*] as you have done for the last four years in Government. So the Anti-Gang Bill was a total failure because the Government has no idea about implementation. They are announcement strong; implementation weak.

So there is no crime prevention plan. What is this administration's plan? One could ask the question: Is the plan to attack anyone who has a dissenting view; Kirk Waithe of "Fixing T&T", if he decides to criticize the Government? That he is unpatriotic? The Media Association—Madam President, it is laughable that when the Media Association brings out a press release, instead of acknowledging that it is from the Association, individuals from the Association are then singled out by the administration, as if the individual, be it the secretary or the PRO, were the ones who penned the opinion. It is the opinion of the Association, not the individual. Now, can you imagine this administration is thinking about—and to me, this is reprehensible at the highest level—thinking about stopping protests outside Parliament? Stopping the masses from protesting because they want to speak truth to power? That goes against the grain of what we stand for here.

In the 1903, Madam President, the Ratepayers Association burnt down the Red House. There was a massive protest outside the Legislative Assembly at that time, what we now call Woodford Square. All right? And do you know that 16 people died that day? Five women, 11 men and 51 others were injured because they were speaking truth to the colonial power. We had no representatives from amongst the people in the Legislative Assembly. Now those 16 souls that died, they died standing for the rights that are enshrined in our Constitution today. They stood for the rights of every citizen. So, "dey bun down the Red House; dey bun it dong dat day" and they got representatives from the people, for the people, to sit in the Red

House and to make laws that are not disadvantageous to the public interest. So when you can have an administration looking at protests outside the people's Chamber—this is the people's space. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to go on to a Joint Select Committee Inquiry Report. This is the Third Report of the Joint Select Committee on National Security, Second Session, (2016/2017) of the Eleventh Parliament on: An Enquiry into the Operations of the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre and the issue of DNA sampling in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam President, microscopy, we have ballistics testing. At the core of ballistics testing is the practice of microscopy, defined as the capacity to match a spent shell or projectile, the part that leaves the shell when a gun is discharged; to match it to the weapon that has so discharged it. So every time a weapon comes to the Forensic Science Centre, they must match the foot or the fingerprint. The microscopy's report recorded which gun discharged the projectile and they have it registered, or should have it registered in some database.

Madam President, would you know that there are only two microscopes? I hope the Government can come and say that they have ordered a heap of them and that they have increased the staff complement. Anything short of that, they should not even touch that part of their contribution in this debate.

2.10 p.m.

Unless you are fixing the problem at the Forensic Science Centre, you can bring laws from now until the next 10 years, the problem of ballistic testing will remain, the backlog will remain and the bottleneck will remain and you will not have convictions. [*Desk thumping*] So there are a number of issues that engage the attention of the Committee and these are the recommendations and unless the Government seeks to address these recommendations in their contribution, they

should not touch the Forensic Science Centre.

1. Operational improvements at the Forensic Science Centre including the reduction of the backlog of DNA testing (Narcotics, Homicides and Ballistics);
2. The accreditation of the Forensic Science Centre and its laboratory services under the International Standards Organization and International Electro Technical Commission;
3. The efficient implementation of the DNA Act and the introduction of the effective methods of DNA sampling;
4. Accommodation issues and staff shortage at the Forensic Science Centre;

They are short-staffed. They are very short staffed and they are lacking equipment.

5. A DNA databank; and
6. The need for regulations to support are important.

Madam President, specifically now:

- “d. Employment of at least four additional qualified Firearm Examiners with extensive work experience...”

Not OJTs. OJTs are good so that they can learn from the experts but do not count them in the establishment. You add them to the establishment.

- “Procurement of scientific equipment (including two more comparison microscopes...”

Madam President, do you know what is the total cost of that? It is less than the cost of the Mercedes Benz brought by the Prime Minister, \$2 million.

- “e. Adequate allocation and timely releases of funds...”

So finally on ballistics, Madam President, effective intelligence leads not only to

convictions but also creates broader intelligence for law enforcement, enabling proactive and not reactive responses. So for \$2 million, cheaper than the paintings bought, they can reduce the backlog of ballistic testing in Trinidad and Tobago. They can improve the conviction rate for firearm offences and they can help solve the problem of crime; \$2 million apparently is too much.

So, Madam President, a crime plan must also be rooted in a regional approach. We belong to a Caribbean civilization and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNLIREC, gave some recommendations for Latin America and the Caribbean and I took but seven of those. Number one, invest in political capital, in the creation of global political will for greater ammunition controls. But, Madam President, when we have so much faux pas in the realm of diplomatic core in this country because at the head of the service, we do not seem to understand in the Cabinet the importance of foreign policy, you will always have problems.

When you have a Minister who acts as the de facto of Minister of Foreign Affairs when he is not even in the Ministry. You know we are talking about the Minister of National Security. He has overstepped his bounds. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is a very exacting job and the person who fulfils that role must fulfil it without having to worry about another Cabinet colleague overreaching where he does not belong. "Bat in yuh crease". So that is to the Minister of National Security.

Another point, Madam President.

Madam President: Sen. Obika, I am going to ask you to desist from that line please because you are—please just desist.

Sen. T. Obika: I will. I wish that there is a better synergy amongst the Cabinet

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Members so that they could understand the importance of foreign affairs as a portfolio.

Another recommendation is to consider pushing for the creation of new international instruments and plugging the holes in the ones that already exist.

Fully implement obligations and commitments regarding ammunition under existing international instruments.

So, therefore, foreign affairs must have a pride and place in your national crime prevention strategy.

Ensure whole of Government approach to ammunition control.

It is a word that this Government likes to announce but does not implement.

Install a culture of restraint when it comes all aspects of ammunition.

Tackle ammunition diversion from Government stockpiles as urgent priority and increase transparency in the sector through practice and regulations.

Madam President, crime and criminality has crippled the economy. The economic development had been put on the backburner. There are businessmen who are feeling the hurt. And none other than the Prime Minister admitted that crime is having a negative impact on the economy. The Prime Minister is on record, Power 102 FM, CNC3, as stating that crime is seeming to be out of control. I am paraphrasing. In an article on 12 June, 2018, entitled.

“PM on crime...

Dr. Rowley admitted that current anti-crime measures are inefficient...”

Madam President, if it was not in black and white, I could not have said it.

“Dr. Rowley admitted that current anti-crime measures are inefficient...”

This is 12 July, 2018, less than a year ago, and I quote him:

“The government of Trinidad and Tobago is responsible for the state of the

country...especially in this particular case where so many citizens, so many communities without prompting will tell you that their concern is crime.”

Now, when you even go to the increasing levels of criminality and you consider April, just April, was considered to be the bloodiest month in our history in terms of murders, you know that we have already passed over the slope. We have gone beyond the precipice. And there is an article entitled:

“April exploded into a bloodbath”— by Faine Richards that states:

“...49 persons were murdered in just 30 days”—representing—“a 25 per cent increase over the 39 people killed in April 2018...”

And this is according to the TTPS. Now, April exploded into a blood bath by Daurius Figueira.

There is another issue of crime and the economy. Whenever the economy is experiencing a downturn or stagnation—so there was a significant downturn, significant recession, now we are going through stagnation. When you are going through such a significant level of economic hardship as we are in this country, crime generally spikes. So the Government's focus should not be to mouth that they are not going to the IMF because they are already implementing a lot of the measures from the IMF. What the Government should have been doing is giving citizens the assurance that they have a stake in this country. But how can they do that? How can the citizens feel that they have a stake in this country when all they see at the highest levels—because morality begins at the top. All they see at the highest levels are persons fattening and feathering their nest using the law to do so. So they increased their pensions significantly: who is going home with 600,000, who is going home with 1.6 million, who is going home with 1.9 million. So they feather their nests and the poor man is under pressure.

So, Madam President, I want to end where I began. Unless this Government is coming to us to tell us how in fact they are going to fix the problems that the people are facing, they should not venture into this debate. Unless they are going to describe how they are going to fix the problem of the right to individual life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived thereof, except by the due process of law, they should not contribute to this debate. If all the Government is going to do is talk about what happened five years ago, get over it, “you supposed to be in Government”. I am saying “supposed to be” because if you are in Government and all you are talking about is the past, it means that you are getting ready to leave office. But the problem is the people of Trinidad and Tobago have to bear the months until you make that decision. Madam President, unless the Government is coming to describe how the right of the individual to equality before the law and protection of the law is going to be fixed, they should not contribute to this debate.

And there is scenario I want to paint. Regularly going home, I would pass through the community of Point Fortin and I would visit with friends and so on, but now because of the significant influx of criminal elements from Venezuela—in fact, the notorious gang leader who was found with significant levels of ammunitions, a cache of ammunitions. He had a significant level of guns and so on. “Bombs” is the word but I cannot remember the—grenades, grenades, Madam President. Where persons in Point Fortin might be accustomed to the “lil one shooter” to go hunting to catch agouti and lappe and deer and so on, this man came in with high-powered rifles, brand new high-powered rifles, grenades and the like. And this person was hiding in the community of Warden Road in Point Fortin where this regime is having their political meeting on Thursday, but they are not seeking to

address the problem of the criminal elements that are coming in, infiltrating in our communities and they are making a bad problem worse. So communities where before I could have gone out at night, take a walk, be comfortable and free, now you do not see persons doing that at all because the level of criminality that we are being met with, the police service has no match for.

So, Madam President, the Government has reached the twilight of their existence. They have spent four years in office. They have wasted time. They have failed to fix the issue of crime and the impact on the school system: safety of students at school, access to students to schools that are safe. They have failed to address the issue of borderlines that affect some communities where crime and criminality is at a high level. They have failed to look at the push factors. The push factors in communities where we had community policing, we had comfort patrols and so on. We had persons in communities who had access to opportunities and this was even under a prior PNM regime. The Partnership Government expanded the opportunities but even under a prior PNM regime but everything from that regime, they want no part of. So where you had youth in communities getting access to training and development opportunities so that they can find a different path for their life because the whole issue of fixing crime is giving persons a proper value for life and for liberty and unless you bring actions—yes, we can have the stick but where is the carrot? All this Government is looking for are “legislative big sticks” because on the ground, the police force will tell you “the vehicles are not working, this is not operational”, the cameras we heard yesterday are not working and so on. So you have “legislative big stick”, failure operationally and no carrot. No incentive to keep persons on the straight and narrow to improve their view on the value of life and liberty of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

What this Government should have come from the very beginning is to look at those push factors where you have communities where persons are getting involved in crime, try to fix it by fixing the people so that they would not make the decision to enter crime, that they would make the decision to be productive contributors to our society. And I want to leave on this point. We are a society, Madam President, made up of immigrants, many of whom did not chose to come here. We are here. We have chosen to stay here. Therefore, we are all vested with an interest in the progress and advancement of our country, every citizen of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. What the Government has been doing is sidelining persons who can contribute—

Madam President: Sen. Obika, you have five more minutes.

Sen. T. Obika: Thank you. I am wrapping up now. The Government has sidelined persons who can contribute and they have created an environment where all that pervades is despair. All that pervades is despair and the Government must rethink its entire approach to crime. Reformation and legislation alone will not fix operational inefficiencies.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Someone needs to second the Motion.

Sen. Ameen: Thank you, Madam President. I beg to second this Motion and I will reserve my time to speak later in the debate.

Question proposed.

The Minister of National Security, Minister of Communications, Acting Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): Thank you very much, Madam President. As always, I appreciate the privilege to contribute in the Senate. At the outset, I

would like to speak to the people of Trinidad and Tobago through the Senate and just inform them that once again this Motion is ill-advised and inaccurate. We start off—it was interesting to hear Sen. Obika talk about the need for data and data-driven policy and the importance of data and statistics. As the draftsman of the Motion, he obviously failed to consider data and statistics when he talked about addressing the extraordinary increase in the level of crime in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam President, I start by debunking that and letting the people of Trinidad and Tobago know a couple of things.

First of all, to deal with issues of national security and to deal effectively with the fight against crime and to have an effective national security apparatus, there is a certain amount of stealth that is needed. There is a certain amount of confidentiality that is needed because you see this administration, working with the current holders of posts in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, our Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force and our intelligence services, guards very jealously the information and the intelligence to ensure the success of operations. This administration does not believe in going at the top of a mountain before the launch of operations to say exactly how we intend to deal with crime. We prefer to let the effects and effectiveness of what is being done be seen.

So I would start off by using the latest CAPA information. This is the data from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service of today's date and it is quite interesting, and if you would permit me, Madam President. One of the litmus tests, one of the measurements of crime is serious reported crime. Serious reported crime includes murders, woundings and shootings, rape, incest, other sexual offences, serious indecency, kidnapping, kidnapping for ransom, burglaries, and break-ins, robberies, fraud offences, general larceny, larceny motor vehicles,

larceny dwelling house, narcotic offences, possession of firearm and ammunition and any other serious crime. I am happy to report today, Madam President, through you, to the population that from the 1st of January to the 22nd of June, we are down 908 serious reported crimes. So last year, at this time, it was 6,620 and this year, it is 5,712, a reduction of 908 at half of our year, and I thank the men and women of the police service, our Defence Force and our intelligence services for the great work they have done in that reduction.

You see, Madam President, crime is very much about perception and there seems to be a continued effort by certain people in our society to instil fear in the population and to instil fear building into this perception of uncontrollable crime. It is a political football of sorts. As everyone in this Senate should be aware and I am sure most of the population is, the body charged with the responsibility of dealing with crime, protecting and serving us, the people, is the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. They are the ones charged with the responsibility to prevent, detect, investigate, apprehend, charge and prosecute criminals in this country. A body like the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service needs leadership. Anyone starting with the tackling of crime, the first thing you would appreciate is the body constitutionally charged with the responsibility of dealing with crime, that is the Police Service, should have a permanent leader, should have a permanent Commissioner of Police.

Madam President, the record reflects that one of the first things this administration did, by December of 2015—I actually believe it was in November of 2015—we had revised the Order for the appointment of a permanent Commissioner of Police and it is important that the population understand why that was done. Because previously, Madam President, it was a very complicated and complex process to

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appoint a Commissioner of Police. You had to use a foreign university, they had to do the evaluation, the advertising. There were a number of very complex procedures and that is why this country—the only Commissioner of Police ever appointed under that regime, that Order was Commissioner Dwayne Gibbs and his Deputy Commissioner of Police. Two Canadians.

But you see, Madam President, by 2012, they had been unceremoniously dismissed and from 2012 to 2015, what we, the citizens, heard when we asked well why is there not a permanent Commissioner of Police, we heard from the Attorney General between 2012 and 2015, say, “yuh doh need ah permanent Commissioner of Police, is better to have someone acting because when they acting, they have tuh sing fuh their supper”. This administration believed differently and what we did is we sought to make it simpler, to simplify the appointment of a Commissioner of Police.

And you know what happened when we did that via an Order here in this Parliament? And part of the simplification process was allowing the Minister of National Security to ask the Police Service Commission to begin the recruitment exercise. Immediately, upon that Order being passed, the Opposition went to court, challenged the order and tied up the whole process. [*Crosstalk*] They like to claim victory, it was not a victory. [*Continuous crosstalk*] The same way they claimed victory in the election petitions and they lost—

Madam President: May I just say that there was silence when the Mover of the Motion was speaking. There is a response now, I would ask for silence by everyone. Continue, Minister.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Madam President. I expect a lot of grumbling. So what happened? The Opposition tied up the appointment of a

Commissioner of Police. I want the population to understand that. When the Government sought to simplify the process to appoint a Commissioner of Police, the Opposition tried to tie up the process and succeeded to do so for a number of months. But, the outcome of the decision was the court simply removed the instigator of the process, being the Minister of National Security, and the process began and the process worked. There was an evaluation, there was recruitment and there was a shortlisting and we came to Parliament to debate who should be the next Commissioner of Police.

And those on the other side, in that other place, decided they wanted to keep the same, they wanted to keep the status quo. So the only one person that they would support in that whole list of shortlisted persons was the officeholder who was acting from 2012 come forward. The country knows what this Government did. In an unprecedented move, this Government decided to operate on the basis of merit and this Government appointed, for the first time since 2012, with a simplified process, a Commissioner of Police in the form of Mr. Gary Griffith, former National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, former Minister of National Security who, to his credit, was fired from the Cabinet for standing up against an Attorney General who is now before the criminal courts with two sets of criminal charges against his name. Well done, Mr. Griffith. Enters a Commissioner of Police. So, Madam President, what then happens? That is only part of the process. Immediately, the country knows that the whole morale in the Police Service was lifted. You now had an energetic person, someone who is thinking outside of the box, someone who is dynamic.

What did the Government do? The Government then move to ensure multiagency work and intelligence-driven operations. All of the operations being driven now

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are being driven by intelligence. Multiagency, what that means to the population is that the police, the defence force, our intelligence services, the prison services, immigration and also some other units to sit at the table—and I heard Sen. Obika saying how I talk about every week I meet with the heads. Yes, every week, I meet with the heads, sometimes more than once a week. And what has that achieved? That simple process plus the use of technology, it is now one-banded unit.

So the Government has begun tackling crime through the use of multi-agency task force for everything and immediately, we began to see the results. Simple fact of sharing intelligence and information because everyone is sitting at the table. Everyone now shares very openly at the table the intelligence to drive the operations as they all sit and plan the operations together. And I can assure the people of Trinidad and Tobago that that is working. We appointed, under our tenure, three Chief of Defence Staff. The last two, I have had the pleasure of working closely with. Rear Admiral Hayden Pritchard did a tremendous job. We then took another decision in the appointment of the current Chief of Defence Staff to choose someone who would be in the position and post for a number of years and not the most senior person.

The reason for that, I tell the population of Trinidad and Tobago, was to give the Chief of Defence Staff who is in the same batch as the Commissioner of Police who is in the same batch as our current director of the intelligence services, an opportunity to work together and we are seeing the effects of that. When I say the same batch, all of them entered the Defence Force at the same time and that simple but very strategic and well-thought-out decision has begun to reap rewards for Trinidad and Tobago in the fight against crime.

Another thing that we did, we rebuilt the relationships with foreign partners. I heard the mockery and the suggestion that I should stay in my crease and not do. But I am tasked by the Prime Minister and he is the only one that can task me. And from very early in the term, Madam President, we set about rebuilding the relationships with our foreign partners and I will tell you something [*Desk thumping*] and I will tell you something about the US. The US, early in the term, told the Prime Minister and myself at the highest levels, they did not trust those who were there before [*Crosstalk*] and they would not share information with those who were there before and that is the truth.

And, Madam President, we set about rebuilding those relationships and I am happy to report now that we have free flow of intelligence, free flow of information, we have free flow of training by all of those agencies in Trinidad and Tobago, something that did not exist before. It is simply did not exist. When we sat in the room and I sat in the room with the DEA, the FBI and other bodies, they said they had gone into a very dark patch in Trinidad's history and they did not know who to speak to, they did not know who they could trust and they just stopped sharing information altogether. I am happy to report to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, those days are over and we now have a free flow of information. [*Desk thumping*] And as a test and a red-ink pen with a big tick of that, I am also happy to tell the population of Trinidad and Tobago that just yesterday, the UK Travel Advisory upgraded Trinidad and Tobago and took us off the very likely of terrorist acts and told us that it is because of all of the work that we have done in close proximity with them and the cooperation. [*Desk thumping*] So well done, Trinidad and Tobago. The Commissioner of Police, the CDS and myself went up to London earlier this year in January, we met with all of the intelligence agencies and they

were basically rating us on the work that we have been doing over the past few years and today, Trinidad and Tobago has gotten an upgrade in its travel advisory. I did not see it reported but I can guarantee you, if it was a downgrade, it would have been a lot of news. Well done, Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

2.40 p.m.

We have also been using the increase use of technology in the fight of crime. And I want to remind the population of Trinidad and Tobago, when we came in as an administration in 2015, I was told by the Special Forces and by our intelligence services that in the period 2010 to 2015, some very strange things happened. The facial recognition system was dismantled by the former administration. The use of the helicopter for Special Forces was converted to a maxi-taxi with a wet bar and a flat screen TV to fly from north to south. [*Crosstalk*] That is what the Special Forces said. It is true. I have seen it for myself. What they also did, Madam President, is they dismantled the servers for use by our intelligence services.

Those are some of the things that were done. And those are—the effects of that type of behaviour is what we are facing today as a country. I am happy to say, Madam President, that we have fixed those issues. We are in the process of upgrading the technology. I would not get into the specifics of the upgrades, but the people of Trinidad and Tobago can know that the current administration is working very closely, in terms of providing the resources and the best technology available that we can afford and value for money, with no kickbacks in any contract for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

We also revamped the SSA. Because I would remind the population, prior to us, they disbanded SAUTT. SAUTT was one of the institutions that was working well in the fight against crime in Trinidad and Tobago. Why did we revamp the SSA?

Because the legislation for the Strategic Services Agency, that legislation, provides for officers from the police service, from the Defence Force, to be seconded into that body. So it is all legal, unlike what happened before. And they are now working well together and there are a number of specialist units that are working with those various agencies, and we are seeing the effects because the detection rates have gone up, as I would show in a short while.

Madam President, mention of the youth. Because Sen. Obika is right. One of the ways you tackle crime is by giving the youth, the disadvantaged youth, and also those who may have difficulties, an alternative to a life of crime. But it is not about talk. It is not about cheap talk and politics. What we have done as a Cabinet is we did tracer studies of the MiLAT programme and the CCC programme to make sure that taxpayers would get value for money. And when we saw the results of that, and we saw the positive effects, and we tested it scientifically, not *vaille que vaille*, not just grant a contract and give people jobs. That is not how we operate. We decided to increase—none other than the Prime Minister directed us as a Cabinet. He wanted us to increase the intakes of the CCC and MiLAT.

We are also using the National Crime Prevention Plan to engage the youth at primary school and secondary school level, and I would like to thank my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of National Security, Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith, for driving that process and using her experience to engage the youth of Trinidad and Tobago as we tackle crime there. [*Desk thumping*]

I am also happy to announce that we are currently looking at refurbishing and re-evaluating the cadets in Trinidad and Tobago. Borders, because there are a lot of illegal firearms and ammunition now available in Trinidad and Tobago and we

all know the reason why. Not only porous borders on our seafront, but also difficulties at Piarco. And that is why I made the point with the dismantling of some of the equipment at Piarco between 2010 and 2015 and some of the technology. It allowed porous entry, both in our legal airports and also at our ports.

So let us start with the sea ports. This Government has implemented and is using the scanners at the ports of Trinidad and Tobago, Point Lisas and Port of Spain. Despite all of the noise and all of the lies told, they are in use.

Just today I was telling Minister Sinanan—and I would like to personally commend him for working along with me as the Minister of National Security—TSA, Transportation Security Agency, in the United States, in charge of all of the airports, was grading Trinidad and Tobago, and we were at risk for a period of time. Working along with Minister Sinanan, the two of us driving it from the top, I am happy to say that this morning I started off my day with a meeting with the TSA and they have given us a clean bill of health and we have done all that needs to be done. [*Desk thumping*] And as I told the TSA, we are not stopping there. We will continue to improve the security systems at Piarco Airport and we have been doing so.

Borders, our sea borders. We came in as an administration in 2015, and saw that the Austal fast patrol vessels were falling one by one. When we enquired why, the reason was that the maintenance contracts were not renewed for the Austal fast ferries. And you know why? Because the other administration, the former administration, decided they wanted to procure Damen vessels. Rather than keep and maintain what we had, they entered into a procurement of new vessels. And we will hear in the coming months about the investigation surrounding the

procurement of those vessels, I am sure. So anyway, what we face is six Austal fast patrol vessels grounded. Shame and disgrace. But that is what we faced. So what did we do? The Prime Minister went to Austal. We had demonstrations and we then sent the Chief of Defence Staff and the Chief Engineer from the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard, and they came back and recommended in writing that we go ahead and procure two Cape Class vessels. I wish we had it before. But they will arrive here next year. That is one of the aspects we have done to “safen” our borders.

Also, the radar system; we have taken a decision to upgrade the radar system and the radar system is operational. I went and I saw it myself in action last week Friday, and it is working. And I can tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago here today, despite all of the noise, all of the untruths, all of the attempts to mislead the population of Trinidad and Tobago with persons coming in on our southern coast, the day after the 14th of June, when the registration process came in, the radar system, and I met with the analyst and the technician, saw it for myself, there was one vessel, one vessel that tried to come in from Venezuela on those borders, where we were hearing from the Chairman of the Siparia Regional Corporation, thousands coming in by the week, hearing another Councillor of no worth whatsoever, screaming: "Is boat loads ah dem coming in." I tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago, through you, Madam President, completely untrue and the technology is there and the technology is proven.

But what we also use the technology for? For the first time they told me, and it was in a conversation I had with the CDS sometime back. I said: “Use your radar system. Use the technology and analyze the data. Go back and look at the points.” Because even in the sea, Madam President, there are pathways that persons will

use time and time again. I said: "Analyze the coastline, see where the points of entry with the most points of entry are." And that is what we did. We found, through data and statistics, where were the points of entry, and that is where we drove our limited resources, via intelligence. And I would like to thank the Coast Guard, the Defence Force, and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the intelligence service for effectively being able to prevent a lot more entry on our borders. And we have been picking up a lot of the illegal arms and ammunition. Just this morning there was a big find of marijuana on a boat out there. We continue to do the work and they are effectively fighting the criminal element. As I say that, they have also been able to reduce the intake of illegal drugs into Trinidad and Tobago, and that is what some of the murders have been about, because people cannot pay for the consignments of their drugs. And then gangs deal with each other in that way, unfortunately. We have been using multi-agency task force on our borders, the special operators on our borders and it has been very effective.

Madam President, criminal justice system, because that is another element in the fight against crime. As we constantly talk around the table with the heads, we can do all that we can. We can find the criminals. We can investigate them. We can charge them, and then it goes to the court system. The Government has not thrown up its arms. The Government accepts and recognizes separation of power. And what have we done? I heard the mockery about the legislation. That is their way. They must try to mock and make fun of, but the population knows better. In assisting the Judiciary to have a more effective criminal justice system, we have improved the court system. We have allowed for specialized criminal courts and for the recruitment of more High Court judges.

Plea bargaining, we have seen the use of the plea bargaining legislation recently, very effective. A former Attorney General and a former Senator charged as a result of plea bargaining arrangements. Termination of preliminary enquiries, well on the way. Explain your wealth legislation. I look forward to the use of this type of legislation.

Gangs, Madam President. Gangs are one of the largest scourges on Trinidad and Tobago and in the fight against crime, gangs and illegal firearms. And I would like to take this opportunity, through you, Madam President, to thank the Members of the Independent Bench for the great work they did for Trinidad and Tobago not too long ago. And the work they did in particular with the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, and we currently have it before us, so thank you. [*Desk thumping*] Thank you Sen. Vieira, Richards, all of the Senators who are here for taking that step forward. Because I heard, I listened, and some of the bold remarks made. We have to be part of the solution in the fight against crime, and how we do that as legislators is by our contribution to proper legislation to assist in the fight against crime.

We have the Firearms (Amdt.) Bill. I will come and participate in that in the not too distant future. That is also an important element. These pieces of legislation are asked for by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. I can tell you all the fight that we are carrying out, out there on the streets is a frightening one, and we need this legislation to tackle the criminal element, because they have no regard for life and no regard for law and order. So if they know, Madam President, that having an illegal firearm in their possession, once, twice, is going to mean a lot more for them, they are going to be stuck in a prison and cannot come out. I guarantee you Senators and people of Trinidad and Tobago, it is going to have a positive effect in the fight against crime.

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I heard the mockery of the anti-gang legislation, and the suggestion that came from my lips that only five people had been charged. If those on the other side took the time to read the anti-gang legislation, they would understand that the effect of the anti-gang legislation is not only about criminal charges. The anti-gang legislation allows the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service in their investigations and in their pursuit against criminals who are living a life of crime through gangs, special powers, powers to enter premises, powers to arrest persons who are harbouring criminals, powers to pull persons aside for questioning, et cetera. And it is being used, no matter how much they say. And it was not us who got the population to come down on the Opposition. The population is fed-up of the crime and the Government is providing solutions, not only through legislation, but that was the one that was at the forefront. And they had to put their tails between their legs, approach us and come and pass, and I am glad they passed it. And I would not harbour on that point. The point I want to make to the population of Trinidad and Tobago, the anti-gang legislation is critical, and it is being utilized by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

To have an effective investigation that turns intelligence and information into evidence that can then be used to charge and prosecute persons takes time. The legislation was not retroactive. So it was the start point for us to begin building the intelligence and information, converting it to evidence and it will lead to charges. I told the people of Trinidad and Tobago that here. There will be big fish taken down in the next set of operations before the end of the year. There are charges that will be laid. The anti-gang legislation is a critical tool in the fight against crime and criminality in Trinidad and Tobago and it is this Government that implement—you talked about implementation? That anti-gang legislation was first

brought in 2012/11 and failed. They talk about implementation? It failed and it had the support of the PNM Opposition at the time. And it has cost this country and the taxpayers of this country hundreds of millions of dollars in damages through the bundling of the utilization and implementation of that anti-gang legislation by the former administration. That is not happening now.

What the population is getting now is the proper use of legislation, and it is being effectively used in the fight against crime. Electric monitoring bracelets, about to be implemented. Again, passed under the former administration. It is finally going to be implemented this year and I look forward to the use of it.

DNA, as I said before, the DNA operations are up. We are building a new DNA lab along with our Forensic Science Center. We are having improved CCTV. I do not know what the comment in passing about a breakdown in the CCTV system, completely untrue. What we have actually been doing over the past few months is implementing new state-of-the-art cameras into our CCTV system, and I guarantee and I tell the people of Trinidad and Tobago it is working. It is working well, including the provision of facial recognition. So we are utilizing technology with the limited budgets we have.

Our prison services. You see, Madam President, our prison services also play a very important part in the landscape and the structure in the fight against crime, a very important role. As Minister of National Security, I have visited all of the Remand Yards. I hear persons talking about the Remand Yards. I have experienced all and I have said here before and I will say it again, when I visited the Tobago prison, I walked out of there an angry citizen of Trinidad and Tobago because all of the administrations gone in the past, there is a fence that was built up at the Maximum Security Prison, not around the prison, not blocking off anything,

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blocking off empty land, built in 2014, for \$80 million. Eighty million dollars for a fence that protects nothing, and we sit here and listen to the audacity of those suggesting about fight against crime? Participants in crime, maybe.

So, Madam President, what we are going to do is, as a Cabinet, we are going to take a decision to build a new correctional facility in Tobago. We have also, with the prisons systems, Madam President, upgraded the alarm system. We have also, Madam President, taken a decision to upgrade and improve the Remand Yard facilities at Golden Grove. Again, when money was flowing, that 80 million could have been taken to improve the system at the Remand Yard. We are doing it for \$53million and it has begun. It has begun. So the prisoners at Remand will now get more humane conditions.

We have upgraded the CCTV camera system. StatVest and firearms provided for the prisons officers. We have improved the security at the prisons. We are going to build a special court, Madam President; a special court to deal with those high-risk prisoners who inconvenience Trinidad and Tobago week and time and time again. The video conferencing court, we are handing it over to the Judiciary who will finish it.

So, Madam President, those are just a few of the decisions taken and implemented and will be completed by this administration in dealing with the prison system. There is a lot more but I do not want to speak about it. So there is implementation taking place.

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, one of the best uses of technology, and I heard it being suggested that there are still vehicles not working, not true. The ERP system now, implemented by the current Commissioner of Police, is a great use of technology. You all would see it, the vehicles driving around with the

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cameras on the roofs, what we do is we deploy them all over Trinidad and Tobago. So when you call a station or you call 999, it is no longer about a vehicle leaving the nearest police station, Madam President, but one of those ERP vehicles that we are constantly monitoring through GPS, we can direct one or two, who are the closest to the scene of the crime, and it has been working. On an hourly basis, reports are coming through. The reports are being shared.

That use of technology, something as simple as all of the executives of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service now being on a WhatsApp group and sharing information, has proved invaluable. So someone in Moruga who says: "Look, I have picked up somebody from Four Roads", the officer, the divisional head for the Western Division and then say: "Well, hold on, this is what we know about him." People of Trinidad and Tobago that is happening. It was not happening before. The technology is being used. There is better communication amongst the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

The use of video and audiovisual recording, again, when we came in as an administration, the British told us that despite all they had asked prior, for the use of visual and audio recording systems in the interrogation of prisoners, there was a reluctance to get it done. We have gotten it done. It is being used.

I heard the talk about community policing, Madam President. One of the main planks and pillars we have introduced, have implemented, and is being utilized, is an increase in the municipal police. Two batches are already out on the fields spread throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The third batch is currently in training and will soon pass out.

Ballistics, absolutely we need the ballistics testing. And what have we been doing with respect to ballistics? We have built out the capacity. I want to tell the

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country another story that we met when we came in, Madam President. Madam President, as soon as we came in, none other than once again the United States Government told us that between 2010 and 2015, they spent millions of dollars in training specific police officers in the testing of ballistics and formed a special unit called CRU and they asked us to re-establish it. So again, the Prime Minister and myself asked: "Well, what do you mean by re-establish it?" You know what the former administration did after all of those officers were trained? They dismantled the ballistics unit called CRU and they sent persons to direct traffic all over the country and to various traffic outposts all over the country and police stations. Does that indicate to the population that they were serious about the fight against crime? So immediately, instructions were given and carried out and that unit is back in operation. But these are not things that we talk about; the effectiveness of their work.

Also, what we have been doing is we are now playing once again a leading role in the Caricom, with something called CONSLE. They would not know what CONSLE is, because they did not participate. But immediately at Caricom, we are now playing a leading role. Not only is the Prime Minister—

Madam President: Minister, you have five more minutes.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Madam President. Not only is the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister of the region in charge of security, but we are now once again play a leading role with CONSLE, which is the meetings of all of the Ministers of National Security throughout the Caribbean.

Not too long ago, about a month ago, I led a team of Caricom Ministers of National Security, participated with them in Washington as we went to lobby for more assistance in the field of ballistics and other areas and we will get it.

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TOCU, a very special unit, I would not talk too much about what they do. But again in 2014 to 2015, those on the other side wanted to disband TOCU, an intelligence unit that goes after transnational organized crime and you know how come they were not able to, no matter how hard they try? Because the United Kingdom Government told Trinidad and Tobago: "If you disband TOCU, we will impose visas onto the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago." And that is the only reason why they kept it. It was not properly utilized. It was not properly resourced. I laugh when I hear them talk about resources effectively working under this administration, once again, today.

Madam President, just to deal very, very quickly, I heard the talk about corruption. White collar crime and corruption is an important element that must be tackled in the fight against crime. And I would like to say, as an administration that is exactly what we did.

EMBD, Eden Gardens, there have also been charges laid, that is not the Government, but charges laid under this administration and a former Attorney General and a former Senator for acts of corruption. Steups all they want but there are facts to be spoken. And there are facts are real. So those are the things that are taking—

Madam President: Minister, I know that you have said it, but I would ask you not to discuss any other parts of those court actions.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, the point is a simple one; that for the first time you have an administration that is prepared to tackle white collar crime. [*Desk thumping*] A lot of talk about Venezuela, but understand I would be back here later on this evening dealing with elements of Venezuela.

But I just want to touch on the suggestion that the Commissioner of Police had a number of criminal elements from Venezuela in hiding, et cetera. There is going to be implemented a special unit to deal with not only the Venezuelans but all foreign criminal elements. I have already begun. The persons that were referred to, in terms of a former gang member who was—and this is the important point, you know—not roaming out there. We found and held that Venezuelan gang leader. I have signed his deportation orders and he will be deported. That is what this administration does. We found them, charged them and they are to be deported.

The registration process has also assisted us in that. It allowed us to build out a lot of intelligence. They said that the murder rate increased even though we passed the anti-gang legislation, not true. The anti-gang legislation is being used, Madam President.

I also heard suggestion that this administration tackled MATT and individuals in MATT, the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago. As the Senator knows, but he is prepared to attempt to mislead the population, no one in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago tackled MATT or any individual from MATT. That is just a complete fabrication. It is an untruth and it is a misrepresentation of fact.

Also talked about stopping protests outside of Parliament. Again, Madam President, completely untrue, and I put it on the *Hansard* here today and to the record and to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. This Government has given no such direction. What you have is a Commissioner of Police who is intent on upholding the law and he has not said people cannot protest. He has said: "Seek my permission and shall be allowed to protest." I have heard the stories from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service of busloads of persons being brought in to

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protest outside the Parliament, and when they are being asked: "Why are you here and for what reason?", they do not even know. So the Commissioner of Police is upholding the law and that is not on any directive of the Minister of National Security. *[Interruption]* Thank you very much.

I am hearing. I want the population to know that Sen. Obika has said it is not the place of the Commissioner of Police to uphold the law.

Sen. Ameen: That is not what he said.

Sen. Obika: I want to correct the record. It is the rights of the citizens to—

Madam President: Sen. Obika, Sen, Obika. Sen. Obika, Sen. Ameen, please. Sen. Obika, that is not the way to invoke a Standing Order and all of this can be avoided if Members will remain silent when another person is speaking. Okay? Continue Minister.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Madam President. So, Madam President—

Sen. Obika: I rise to invoke Standing Order 46(6), on what the Minister said.

Madam President: Minister continue, but you have to wind up, because—

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much.

Madam President: Yes.

Hon. S. Young: So, Madam President, I end by saying to the population of Trinidad and Tobago that this administration is resourcing and helping those whose duty it is to fight and tackle crime. We take it very seriously and we know that everyone's life has the potential to be affected by crime, and we will continue to do all that we are doing and more for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you, Madam President. *[Desk thumping]*

Sen. Dr. Maria Dillon-Remy: I thank you, Madam President, for joining this

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debate. My purpose here today is to establish that crime is every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago's business. As I heard the, let us say, bantering between the two sides of the—between the Opposition and the Government benches just now, I think, as far as I am concerned and as far as many of our population is concerned, the blame game has to stop. When somebody is in Opposition they are concerned about crime, and when they get into Government they try to do something about it. They may or may not succeed, and this keeps going again, and again, and again.

Crime is out of control in Trinidad and Tobago, and I appreciated what the Minister just said in terms of the serious crime, in terms of numbers going down. But anybody in Trinidad and Tobago will tell you today that what is happening in terms of crime is unacceptable. So even though the numbers may be going down, in terms of serious crime, we are all concerned. But as I am saying, it is everybody's business; the Opposition's business as well as it is the Government's business. And it is time we take responsibility for what is going on in the nation. The problems that we have in Trinidad and Tobago at every level have been created by us, at the level of the politics, at the level of the community, at the level of the individuals. These problems did not happen overnight. The problems with crime kept climbing over the years, and so far our efforts have not been successful. Yes, we are making progress, but we have to make even more progress. And I am saying it has to be done at every level.

The Minister of National Security was very clear just now that the responsibility of crime prevention, detection, et cetera, is the responsibility of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. However, what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago right now, it is beyond the police service as far as I am concerned. It has to go the level of the businessmen. It has to go to the level of the community in terms of what is

happening, in terms of where our criminals are being nurtured.

It has to go to the level of the schools, it has to go to every level in order for some things to be done significantly about it. So yes, the parliamentarians would be doing what they need to be doing in terms of passing legislation, and yes the police service as far as the Minister of National Security and all the efforts that are going on recently, I am certainly happy about it, but it is more than them.

3.10 p.m.

The horror stories are too numerous to mention, they have been spoken and there have been several debates here in the Parliament, we know the statistics and I think what is happening to many of us right now is that as you have another murder, it is now—next. The toll is going up, we are listening to it on television, we are seeing it on the papers, and right now, many of us, our hearts are, you know, probably we do not know what else to do, but—next. And these are lives.

I think if we calculate the number of people, I am not too sure who has done it, who is doing the research, the number of people and young people, over the last say 10 years, who have lost their lives in this country as a result of crime, it will be certainly, I do not know, world war, it is worse than wars. We have wars that are going on in our nation and it needs to stop and I am saying it cannot be stopped at the level of the politicians alone, it cannot be stopped at the level of the police service alone, it has to be stopped when every citizen of this country says, “I take responsibility for what is going on here and I have to do something about it” and that is how I feel about it.

Madam President, our criminals are being nurtured; they do not fall out from the sky, they are born in a community; when the mother is pregnant, she goes to a health care facility, so she is seen and examined by all nurses or doctors, she then

goes to the hospital and delivers, because most of our babies are delivered in hospitals. The young children within the first five years are seen in our health care institution. So they are seen, these people do not come out from the sky, they do not drop from Mars, they are in our communities. They go into schools, the schools are in communities, they are seen by our teachers; in other words, every step of the way we know where these people are. They are not invasions that have come from Mars, we nurture them in our communities. My understanding is that since we are nurturing them, and we know exactly where they are, we can stop what is happening. Many of them are also in our places of worship.

Madam President, crime is profiting. The day people no longer profit from crime it is going to stop, and even what was happening here today, it is profiting the politicians, to quarrel and complain that the others are not doing something about it. It is profiting some as to say that the others did not do what they were supposed to do with it. It is profiting people. It has to stop. When crime no longer profits people it is going to stop, and right now as far as the nation is concerned, it is not good enough for the politicians to be blaming one another. We all have to take responsibility for what is going on.

Our criminals vote. Our criminals vote, and the other day there was a video going around where in some community, somebody was saying to a politician who was passing through, "We vote for you, we vote for you, and we would not vote for you again if." Our criminals vote, and therefore if we know who they are and where they are and they vote for us or not vote for us, we can do something about it. Madam President, we have a knight in shining armour, kind of "Spiderman" superhero has to come to solve crime and that is exactly what was happening and even the Minister of National Security spoke about it again.

Everybody was talking about crime, what is happening with crime, we need a Commissioner of Police as though this Commissioner of Police was going to come and immediately as he came everything was going to happen. He has come, he is struggling, why? Because there are many systems that need to be put into place and he is doing his best with all the facilities and all the new things they are doing and those are fine. But it is beyond the Commissioner of Police alone, he has to have support and the support has to come from all of us. I do commend and I am happy to hear what the Minister just reported, in terms of the inter-agency task force and all these things that are being done. All those are commendable but they must continue, it cannot be an overnight thing that is happening.

Madam President, I want to share a story about a visit I had at a police station probably about three years ago reporting an accident. A young man bounced my car one day, and I went to make a report at a police station and this young constable said to me, "You know that in that area there are drugs or drug people operating?" He asked if I knew the name of the person who bounced the car. Yes, I gave him the name. And then he said, "Did the person say he was going to fix the car?" I said, "Yes." And then he proceeded to tell me that he was going to call the person and ask the person to make sure that he fixed my car. And I am saying, this is a young police officer telling me that there is crime going on and this is a drug whatever, and the person was probably involved in drugs. Why should he be telling me this and not doing anything about it? Why should he be telling me this and then calling the person and telling the person you better fix the lady's car; as far as I was concerned it was very strange. But unfortunately, Madam President, about a year later that young man was gunned down, he is now dead. Probably if something was done about it at that point in time he may not have been.

The people in the—many of the people on police service know exactly what is going on and there seems to be a reluctance in terms of doing things about it and again I commend what the Minister just said in terms of the actions of the Commissioner of Police and what is happening now and I do, for all our sakes, wish them well in terms of the activities that are happening.

Madam President, my understanding is that the solution to crime, as I said, is everybody's business. Yes the police service may have a central role to play, but the role in terms of the solutions have to come at every level, where at the community level where the criminals are being nurtured as I said we have to get into those communities. We have to get to the parents, we have to have parenting programmes in those communities where at least the parents are assisted in terms of making decisions and stuff like that for their children and their families.

We have to have intervention at the community level, we have to have intervention at the level of the business people, we have to have intervention at the level of the schools. What is happening in the schools? Many of the children are coming out and they do not know how to read and write and as far as they are concerned they cannot do well in school so they might as well go into crime, it pays them more anyway then going to look for a job. So we have to get our interventions also at that level, Madam President.

We have to get interventions at the level of our places of worship. They are very important in our communities. We have different faiths and Trinidad and Tobago is very—a country that is very involved with different communities of worship and they are important to our communities. They have to also be involved in the crime prevention. Our communities have to say there is zero tolerance to crime and mean it. I remember a couple years ago, I was told about a situation

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where the people in Charlotteville said that, "We doh have crime down here because people know it if they come here and they commit crime, we are going to deal with them". They had a zero tolerance to crime.

I am saying that our communities have to say that we are not accepting what is happening in our communities in order for it to stop. The communities have to stop harbouring criminals, the communities have to stop knowing where the criminals are and not sharing the information with the police service. Yes I know there are problems because they are concerned about safety, et cetera, but I am saying when at the level of Trinidad and Tobago when that happens we are going to see something that is very different.

Madam President, I heard about a programme that happened in the prison services in Colombia. I was trying to find the details of it but I could not in preparation for today, but it is something that we can look up. In the prisons in Colombia where there were notorious gangs and criminals, et cetera, values programme was introduced where these criminals were taught about certain values. It caused a turnaround in what was happening within the prison. Something like that, I am sure would benefit. We have people going into prisons, we have Vision on Mission, and we have the different organizations going into prison. I am suggesting that a programme that is sustained and that teaches the persons in prison values, probably would be something that will be of benefit and could work in our prison systems here.

Values-based education, the young people in school they are being nurtured right now in some areas; like the schools in Tobago, there is a character-based programme that is teaching children about character values of respect, responsibility, et cetera, being good citizens. I am suggesting that those kinds of

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programmes could be very helpful in terms of young people and prevention of crime. Businesswomen, businessmen need to also be involved in providing solutions.

My understanding, Madam President, is that the situation that we have within Trinidad and Tobago was created by us and we have the solutions within ourselves and within our communities and at every level. So I commend the Minister of National Security, the Commissioner of Police and all that is happening at that level and that the level of the Parliament there has been a lot of work going on here in terms of the legislative agenda. The Minister also mentioned that what has happened in terms of the Judiciary. At every level we have to be involved, but it has to be a coordinated effort. It cannot be that one person is doing one thing here and then somebody doing something else. So I am suggesting that we have a coordinated effort as crime is our number one problem in Trinidad and Tobago and in that way we are going to see a positive effect.

Madam President, crime is out of control, the solution is with us and we must put our collective heads to get control of it; at every level we need leaders to find the solutions and I know that we can do it. I thank you.

Sen. Anita Haynes: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Madam President. Firstly, I would like to just thank Sen. Obika for bringing this very important Motion on crime and security and our public safety in the Senate. I know in recent times we have had elements of a crime debate by way of the legislation that is before the Senate and today we get to deal with it in a more holistic fashion.

And, Madam President, as I prepared for the debate and I prepared specifically for the response of the Minister of National Security. I am not a person that is easily shocked or a person that really gets shocked by another

person's behaviour, because I have come to expect very little from some of the leaders in our society today. But, Madam President, what I saw today by way of intellectual gymnastics and dishonesty was beyond. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of National Security, looked at the Motion. The first part of the Motion says:

“...the responsibility of the Government to ensure public safety and security through the maintenance of law and order;”

And the second is that:

“...the Government has failed to address the extraordinary increase in the level of crime...”

Now to me, Madam President, the first two parts, the Minister or any sensible person had to at least agree with, because if you had come here to say perhaps these are our interventions and may need a little more time that is one thing, but to come here and say—the Minister said I am going to debunk the second part of the Motion and then gave us a serious crime statistic and tell us that serious crime is down.

And then later on in his contribution outright say that it is untrue to say since the passage of the anti-gang legislation that murders have gone up. I mean, that was dishonest beyond measure, the facts are before us. [*Desk thumping*] How could you stand up here and say that like we do not live in this country. And then go on to say crime is about perception and that there are elements in this society and pointing at the Opposition and telling us that crime is about perception and there are those of us who want to instil fear in the population.

The same Minister of National Security that was here in a last debate to tell us that crime is out of control, if you all do not do something and help us, what are

we going to do. The same Minister that sits next to the Attorney General that has come here time and time again to seek to weaponize our fear for the passage of legislation to say you are afraid of crime, things are out of control, help us pass this legislation, this will help the problem. To come here and today suggest that serious crime is down and that the Opposition is instilling fear by pretending there is a problem. Intellectual gymnastics and dishonesty by the Minister of National Security. I could not believe what I was hearing here today. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, the—when Sen. Dillon-Remy stood up and really it is not my intention to go through an entire response to the Minister of National Security because I agree with Sen. Dillon-Remy that the population is so completely fed-up of this kind of blame game and this constant, who did what and who did—but, Madam President, the response by the Minister of National Security has me incredibly incensed that I really, I mean, you know. You came here today to discuss the responsibility of the Government to ensure public safety and at a point in time the Minister of National Security makes the statement that the body in charge of policing is the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, true. And then the Minister dropped a bunch of “we’s” in there and we are doing this and we have charged people, and we have done this. And I mean—and I am seeing where the problem is you know, Madam President. The Minister of National Security has not found his space in this thing yet. He does not understand at all what his role is, he has no concept of what his role is and I will give you—and I will explain why I say that.

So the Minister has said that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is responsible but then he said that we are bringing charges and these people are going to be charged, et cetera, et cetera—[*Interruption*—yes, exactly. So, at some

point in time the Minister of National Security felt that he joined the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service as a PC. So he is PC Minister Stuart Young in this House—*[Desk thumping]*—because he could come here and tell us who is going to be charged and when. And, you know, the reason the Minister cannot find his space in this thing and to present cogent arguments at a targeted approach to a solution to our crime problem is because they are not focused on a solution. They are a Government obsessed with the Opposition, obsessed with the United National Congress and that obsession has put blinders over them.

Anything—Madam President, anything you look at including the response to this debate here today, all the Minister could find to talk about is the United National Congress and Opposition and who they coming for, and who you looking for, and who will be next. And this is the problem—that is our Minister of National Security and Minister of Communications, as a—I mean, I cannot really, I will not go down the laundry list, but I will keep it at the two main—and as a matter of fact, I had to write; I took another note.

When the Minister was going through, again blatant dishonesty with respect to Trinidad and Tobago's relationship with our international partners including the United States. Minister of National Security, who according to the public record became Minister of National Security last year, yes?—2018? The Minister did not even realize that because as the Minister came here today he said the US spoke to the Prime Minister and myself and told us we could not trust X, Y and Z in the last administration, this is early on, 2015/2016. The US spoke to the Prime Minister and myself. Why were they speaking to Minister Young at that time? He was not Minister of National Security. He is confusing himself. I am telling you, Madam President, the approach by the Minister to just try to come in here and drop blows

and say X, Y, and Z, you could tell, you could tell he was really going to confuse himself today—[*Interruption*—trip up himself bad.

Telling us today that you are repairing a relationship with the United States of America that the People's Partnership somehow did not have, bringing no evidence to back that claim up, eh. Because you just—so you say it, so is so. But in the papers, in the newspapers in the last week, the United States puts out a report, the TIP Report on human trafficking. The Prime Minister, no other but the Prime Minister, pretty sure did not read the report, hop up on a tirade, right, talking about the same United States—how “all yuh” could say that? The Minister of National Security sitting in a Cabinet where the Prime Minister is “bouffing up” international partners left, right and centre coming here to tell us about repairing relationships.

I am telling you intellectual gymnastics afoot today, Madam President. That happen in the last week, and then telling us that you came here—that you have gone to the United States and you have gone to Washington and you have gotten—to seek help for ballistics, et cetera. So on one hand you going to seek help and another hand you are saying, “Doh tell we nothing”. But on the other hand you are saying the British, the UK has changed our advisory. So either you like when the international partners say something or you do not like it, but you do not get to just in the same sentence be—in the same sentence do that kind of gymnastics and play one side and the other, you like it or you do not like it. And the Minister really needs to make up his mind.

And, you know, Madam President, I sat here today and I listened to the Minister of National Security call out things as achievements including the—[*Interruption*—to say that there is now under this administration a coordinated

approach with all the agencies of national security. Madam President, the establishment of the National Operations Centre which they did not like, right, was under the People's Partnership administration. [*Desk thumping*] The foundation of the National Operations Centre was a coordinated centralized approach of all agencies responsible for security. So you came here and act like that is something that happen last year. The Minister said, and you know and we—the most honest thing the Minister said today was let us judge them by the results.

We are fully, fully prepared to judge you by the results of your crime interventions, because they are failing—[*Desk thumping*]*—*but you have also, Madam President, what they fail to understand is that failure in national security impacts people's lives, Madam President; people in this country are fearful for their lives and that is not just because of a perception. It is because more and more of us, more and more of us have become victims of crime, or know somebody who has become a victim of crime. And then to come—you come here and you list off things, one after the next, without talking about its effectiveness and its impact and telling us that we have an invested interest in whether or not—in if they fail in the crime situation.

Madam President, this is an administration that is failing in health care, failing in education, failing on the economy; from a political perspective we do not need them to fail on crime, you know; we hope they could get some success in this area because it directly impacts the people of Trinidad and Tobago. But they are so comfortable in their mediocrity and so comfortable in their failure that they do not even bother, they do not even bother to say, "Listen these are our targets, this is what we hope to achieve, these are the interventions that will achieve it". Because, Madam President, like I said, they are not thinking about solutions, they are really

just obsessed, obsessed with the Opposition.

Madam President, I have heard the Attorney General say that what we have in Trinidad and Tobago now is that the crime situation—and this is why I talk about intellectual gymnastics. Members on the other side have admitted that crime, particularly murders and serious crime, traditionally tends to increase at the times when the People's National Movement is in power. They have admitted that. And then would suggest that the reason crime would increase under them is not their fault, it is because perhaps there was another Government before and they did X, Y and Z. But then come here and talk about the interventions that we put into place that they failed to effectively utilize. But try to—but rather attempt to recreate and use it in a different way or much like what they are doing with the Couva Children's Hospital, right? You had the hospital, you are going to use it, but you are going to just—you leave it closed for four years and you come now and you try to rename it and pretend it is a whole new thing. That is what they are doing, that is what they try to do with the National Operations Centre and this idea that they have some brand new establishment of inter-agency work.

Madam President, you know, the Minister of National Security came here to tell us about the Commissioner of Police and I know that the selection of a Commissioner of Police is their one saving grace and accomplishment under the area of national security, and, you know, when you set an incredibly low bar for yourself you would always get the pass mark or the highest grade, right? So the one thing you wanted to achieve—[*Interruption*—yes. As my colleague reminded me, yes, they are in a habit of grading themselves; you did not like the “F” grade from TIP Report, you want to grade yourself. You do not like the grade from the financial bodies, you come back to grade yourself. So if you do not like the grade,

you just mark your paper accordingly. But, Madam President, the selection of a Commissioner of Police and then to be listed as the main achievement of this Government has to be the lowest bar any administration has set.

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

Because the Minister admitted that up until 2018, Dwayne Gibbs was the Commissioner of Police, so it has happened. Therefore, what are you really telling us? You did one thing in four years and you pat yourself on the back for the next what, year and a half with no measurable impact on the crime situation as yet, Mr. Vice-President?

3.40 p.m.

When the Minister of National Security was speaking, and he raised that point on the collaboration with international partners, I had to pull—I had to go through some of the documents that we have collected as a party, the United National Congress, and what we would have achieved in our tenure as Government from 2010 to 2015, because I remember clearly the significant amount of work that was done. Because we did see—and I want to put the numbers on the record, Mr. Vice-President, because I think there seems to be some—for some strange reason, the Government thinks that they can fiddle with the numbers or at least pretend they do not exist as they do.

Between 2010 and 2015, the murder numbers decreased. We saw a drop in the measure that we used most, murders. In 2018 at 516 murders, we were at the highest we had been since 2008, Mr. Vice-President. Those are the facts as they are lay before us. The reason—so then when you come here now and you tell us that every time you are in Government crime spirals out of control but you cannot take responsibility for it, what are you really telling the nation? If you can admit

Government's Failure to
Address Crime
Sen. Haynes (cont'd)

the responsibility—and, you know, the responsibility of the State, the primary responsibility of the State is to protect the citizens of the country. The Prime Minister acknowledged that. He is on record as saying, if you cannot deal with the problem as a Government, you are part of the problem as the Government. [*Desk thumping*]

So then, I went through the document and we had highlighted collaboration with international agencies, and this gave a concrete example of where the collaboration under the People's Partnership tenure with international agencies yielded results, and I would put it on the record now. Trinidad and Tobago law enforcement agencies have successfully collaborated with regional and international security counterpart in several drug interdiction operations. In October 2013, 800 kilos of cocaine were seized through local agencies, inclusive of the Transnational Organized Crime Unit working with Spanish Police. Based on critical tip-offs and data acquired through our intelligence agencies, local law enforcement worked with the United Kingdom National Crime Agency and French Customs and Caribbean Operation upon which 310 kilos of cocaine were further seized. The Ministry—that is the Ministry of National Security under the People's Partnership administration—in 2013, had been forging stronger communication links with countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Colombia, China, France, Spain and Italy.

You see, so when the Minister of National Security and Minister of Communications, a person that society would hope would be a credible source of information comes here and says, the United States tells him and the Prime Minister that they could not talk to anybody in the previous administration when the data and anybody that was just willing to check easily can prove that to be

false, Mr. Vice-President, we are in trouble as a nation, because we cannot believe anything he has to say. [*Desk thumping*] He came here in the Parliament and said that on more than one occasion. The nation does not believe. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Vice-President, I mean, the Minister of Trade and Industry is telling me now that we will see. I am not quite sure what we are hoping to see. I am really not quite sure what the Minister is hoping that we see, because you know, when you look—[*Crosstalk*] When the Minister of National Security, again, said today serious crimes are down and that, you know, again, the Opposition is trying to instil fear, I do not know that the Minister checked that statement against the Prime Minister. Because I have a statement from the Prime Minister from the end of last year where the Minister said, not in this country, nobody, not man, not woman, not child, press, could present an argument to us in Trinidad and Tobago, a convincing argument, that we do not have a serious crime problem. That is the Prime Minister.

So I think, in future, the Minister of National Security should allow the Prime Minister to at, very least, vet his speeches before he comes here so they do not contradict each other in that manner, because it is quite embarrassing. Yeah. The very least, listen to when the Prime Minister is speaking because then you would understand that there is a problem and that you as the Minister are supposed to be part of the solution instead of coming here and pretending there is no problem. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. S. Hosein: It has no crisis in Venezuela.

Sen. A. Haynes: Yes, I remember that. The Minister of National Security, Mr. Vice-President, went on to talk about the municipal police as an example of community policing. In a number of budget contributions, we had raised that they

kept putting this as an achievement or as a possible intervention in crime, not allocating the money, not implementing it. But if the Government had been serious about community policing, all they had to do, Mr. Vice-President, was keep the system that was in place prior to 2015, because we had set up a system of community policing, and it is because we went with an overarching philosophy that in order to see a sustained and sustainable decrease in the crime situation in our country, you have to take community-based approaches. This takes community-based crime prevention strategies, crime detection strategies. It also takes into consideration things like education, health care, your standard of living and looking at people as people. And then to come here now and tell me about political football and crime as a political football, when you have been systematically dismantling things that were put in place to build Trinidad and Tobago community by community [*Desk thumping*] and then telling me—and you have done that, and now you are trying to rebrand or, at the very least, implement a much less effective way by way of the municipal police and not think about it, not present to us any kind of details of your implementation. Mr. Vice-President, we see very clearly why we are in the problem we are in today. We see very clearly why the numbers are increasing and why the numbers have spiked.

To look at the Motion—and I know what was the bothersome part of the Motion for most of the Government eh—we call that it be resolved:

“...that this Senate call on the Government to table, in the shortest possible time a cogent Strategic Crime Prevention Plan to address the unacceptable levels of crime facing the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.”

And I know what the—I get a sense I know what the issue here is, so I decided I will help the Government out and I went to the Oxford Dictionary for them to tell

them what a plan is, because I think that is the starting point. They just really do not know what a plan is and it is a detailed proposal for doing or achieving something.

So you identify the problem, you articulate it and then you provide a detailed proposal for addressing it. The Minister could not do that and decided to come to tell us that you have to have a space where some of it, you have to be very strategic and there must be some level of stealth, but then privy to tell us about meetings he is not supposed to tell us about and secret information. So, you know, if you—in saying this idea of stealth, when they were in Opposition, they presented a 10-point crime plan that they in no way stuck too. It is gone out the window, gone completely. You cannot hear about it again, but all of a sudden now, you really cannot tell us what the plan is, because it is against the Government's strategy.

Mr. Vice-President, I will get to the point on the prison system, and when I listened to what the Minister of National Security had to say—that they were starting up things—I had to pinch myself, because a lot of these programmes were in place and then stopped for the claim of a lack of resources. Remember if you will, Mr. Vice-President, when this Government came into office, the sky was falling, the Treasury was empty, cobwebs. Remember? There were—[*Crosstalk*] Wow! Wow! The Minister of Trade and Industry is saying fact, but found money to build the pool in Hilton from the empty Treasury, right [*Desk thumping*] from that money. [*Desk thumping*] Good. [*Crosstalk*] So that when you are telling me—

Mr. Vice-President: Continue, Sen. Haynes. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Sen. A. Haynes: So that the narrative of the empty Treasury led to a lot of cuts, but what they will not tell you is a lot of those cuts also came from prison reform programmes. One of the achievements that the Government likes to list is the

reduction in the size of the Cabinet, and in that reduction of the size of the Cabinet you saw the removal of the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice had under it a specific mandate to look at the prison system and prison reform, and I have in front of me a number of policies that would have been, at the very least, near completion.

And so, this is the same Government that stands here and tell us about merit or they hired the former advisor of national security and the former Minister of National Security, but they would not tell us why they stopped a number of the things that were already in place. If you were so responsible as a Government, you would have continued the work that we were doing and built on it instead of just stopping it. You stopped and then you coming to restart it one year out from an election.

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

Under the Ministry of Justice, you had before it a restorative justice policy, and the Minister's mandate was to transform the criminal justice system from a retributive model to restorative, and the policy was developed through consultation with all of the relevant stakeholders, and it was anticipated that in the first quarter of 2016, the policy would have been finalized and submitted to Cabinet.

So, you see, and then when you hear the Government speak, they are still speaking about the policy as if it is in the process of being etched out, when really it would have been completed. You could have looked it over and they could have hit the ground running as a new Government, but they chose not to do that, which is why I say time and time again they are not interested in solutions. So they were trying to carry this blame game as far as possible, and they are going to try to carry it into next year. And so, therefore, I really do not see—what I anticipate will happen is a

continuation of, “Well we finish this policy and we did this policy”, because you want to take credit for work that was already done.

When you look at the projects, the Minister of National Security said that he went into the prison, all of the prisons and, you know, this obsession with the fence. Again, another thing that we really could not believe. But under the People's Partnership, we had the Penal Reform and Transformation Unit under the Ministry of Justice which facilitated a number of training programmes for inmates and staff, and I am just going to list a couple of them here, Madam President.

You looked at, they were trained in unpacking the journey to masculine and feminine excellence in programmes for inmates at Remand Prison and Golden Grove Prison and Carrera—at least 300 inmates were trained; repositioning parents for raising successful youth, you had 50 inmates trained; rehabilitation of gang members, 41 inmates participated; a man's journey into authentic manhood, 70 inmates participated; you had life skills pre-release programmes; you had in-prison drug treatment and rehabilitation programmes; you had persons learning about their space in society; you had persons figuring out how to navigate post-incarceration. The programmes were in place.

All they needed to do, Madam President, was build on it. All you needed to do was see what was already in place, compare it to what your plans were, assuming you had a plan, and build on it, but you saw no building, you saw no forward movement, you saw none of these things being put in place. What you saw was a cut and paste. You heard the term of whole-of-government approach bandied about left, right and centre—we are adopting a whole-of-government approach, X, Y and Z and then none of it was articulated in any structured manner on how the whole-of-government approach was intended to work.

Madam President, you have before us a Government—and, you know, one of my colleagues took great umbrage when the Minister of National Security raised the fact that one of their key new initiatives is this WhatsApp group for the TTPS, and I do not know why my colleague was so surprised, because this is the Minister of National Security that gets a lot of his information from Facebook. I have been time and time again called, in my other remit as public relations officer, to respond to statements from the Minister of National Security on something that he saw on Facebook and saw it fit to use the weight of the National Security Ministry to respond to and to comment on, including—and, you know, the Minister sought to disprove this idea that there has been this tit-for-tat with the media and whatnot. The love affair with the fake news and misinformation statements comes from the Minister of National Security.

Every single time I have to respond to something is because the Minister is picking something up from Facebook to create a narrative and to create a problem, and I oftentimes respond to that by saying, well is the Minister of National Security not busy, a little too busy to be combing through people's Facebook to see who is saying what about him and commenting and sending you messages and then sending the Ministry of National Security press department to respond?

And, you know, so I wanted to—the reason I was not in any way shocked that the WhatsApp group was a big achievement is because Facebook is part of the intelligence agency that they are using. You know, the Minister spoke about the vehicles and that they are employing technology, and you do not have to worry about a vehicle coming from the station—you do not have to worry about a vehicle coming from the station—

Madam President: Sen. Haynes, you have five more minutes.

Sen. A. Haynes: Thank you, Madam President—and that the vehicles would come to you from wherever they are. By information that is coming to me, Madam President, still to this day, is that the Government has not been allocating the funds for the regular maintenance and servicing of police vehicles. Police officers are still being told, do not drive too fast, try to extend the mileage on the vehicles. So it is all well and good you put the camera on top, but if you are not doing regular maintenance on the police vehicles, what are you actually achieving?

The Minister also came here to thank the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for the work that they are doing, and I also would like to thank the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for the work that is being done; the work that is being done under extremely strained circumstances. Madam President, you would recall that under the People's Partnership administration, recognizing that as crime increased, that the people who serve our nation under national security had put themselves at a greater risk. And as Prime Minister, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar said, if you are a police officer who died in the line of duty, that your family would be entitled to \$1 million.

We asked about it in 2015 and, again, in 2016 and it was always something that is being worked on. So I wonder if the Minister of National Security, at some point in time will tell us what is the status of this, because all of the thanks to the police service—all of the “thank yous” that you are giving out and the recognition of how dangerous the job is—tell us what you are actually doing for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service officers. [*Desk thumping*] Tell us what is actually being done, because I think they are beyond the point of just wanting “thank yous”, a little bit more, a little bit more at this point.

And you had, Madam President, officers being told, right now, that there is

no money for the uniforms. So if your tactical boots, if they are worn out, spend your money and buy it or wear it as is. That is the thanks that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is getting. That is the thanks. Right? If you have one pants and if something happens to that pants, problems, trouble for you. That is the thanks. So you come here and I do not understand if the Minister and the members of the Government, if they feel like you could come here in Parliament and say anything and privilege will protect you from the people of Trinidad and Tobago. They are watching you. They know when you are not telling the truth. [*Desk thumping*] They know what they are experiencing on a day-to-day basis. So when you come here and you say, "Doh worry, the Opposition trying to tell you be fearful of crime, they know that is not true." When they come here and say you have great respect for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, they know that is not true. Right?

Madam President, what they know is that the Opposition has brought a Motion to say that the Government has a responsibility to do something about crime and that the Government has failed to do that thing [*Desk thumping*] about crime and the Government, because they are not interested at all in solutions, will continue to fail because they are going to continue to be obsessed with the Opposition. They are going to continue to bring pieces of legislation where they could stand up here and say, that coming for you and it coming for you and it coming for the next one, and not be concerned about bringing actual justice to society and peace to Trinidad and Tobago, and I thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

Madam President: Hon. Senators, before I call on the next speaker, I would like

to just revert to the earlier business. I am now in receipt of the instrument of appointment.

SENATOR'S APPOINTMENT

Madam President:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By Her Excellency PAULA-MAE WEEKES, O.R.T.T., President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

/s/ Paula-Mae Weekes

President.

TO: MR. NDALE YOUNG WHEREAS Senator the Honourable Dennis Moses is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, PAULA-MAE WEEKES, President as aforesaid, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44(1)(a) and section 44(4)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, NDALE YOUNG, to be a member of the Senate temporarily, with effect from 25th June, 2019 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator the Honourable Dennis Moses.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and

UNREVISED

Tobago at the Office of the President, St.
Ann's, this 25th day of June, 2019"

AFFIRMATION OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Ndale Young took and subscribed the Affirmation of Allegiance as required by law.

GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO ADDRESS CRIME

Madam President: We will now resume the debate. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat): Madam President, I thank my colleague, Sen. Haynes, for some light-hearted moments in the last 40 minutes, but to be serious it was in his book published in 2012, *The Nightwatchman's Occurrence Book*, that V.S. Naipaul reprised something most of us would have heard when we were growing up, you do something silly or stupid and some one of your parents look at you and ask you if "dog eat your shame". I hope that is parliamentary, Madam President—ask you if "dog eat your shame".

Sen. Ameen: Tell Stuart Young that. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: And it is a way of bringing you back to your senses.

Madam President: Just one second. You see the crosstalk, because somebody will indulge in the crosstalk and then somebody will respond and then somebody will be upset with it. Stop it now, please. Let the Minister make his contribution. Continue Minister.

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: Thank you very much, Madam President. It is a way of bringing you back to your senses, and I am so happy that we are all clear that in the context of dealing with crime, the principal instrument is the Trinidad

and Tobago Police Service. In numerous debates I have pointed that out. In fact, I have warned my colleagues here that the matter of passing legislation falls to us, but the matter of implementation falls to principally the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

I am also heartened to hear all the support for the Commissioner of Police. In fact, last night I heard one of colleagues on the opposite side described the commissioner as "Super G". But, Madam President, a few nights ago [*Crosstalk*] we debated a piece of legislation called the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, and it was on June 11, 2019, that the Commissioner of Police issued a press release in relation to the Bail (Amdt.) Bill and the Firearms (Amdt.) Bill which we started yesterday, and the Commissioner of Police was saying to population and I suppose the legislators, in particular, that he needs the Bail (Amdt.) Bill. And when I looked at the *Hansard* on that evening when we dealt with the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, I see: Wade Mark, no; Anita Haynes, no; Khadijah Ameen, no; Saddam Hosein, no; Taharqa Obika, no and Sean Sobers, no.

Sen. Ameen: Sobers was not here.

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: So, Madam President, my question is, how can you seriously come to this House, not so long after that night, and shamelessly advocate first on behalf of the Commissioner of Police, and advocate secondly on behalf of the citizens of this country? You clearly lack shame, and if you had shame, dog has eaten it.

Sen. Baptiste-Primus: Oh my God! [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: And then, if you missed that June 11th press release, June 24, 2019, yesterday, the Commissioner of Police described in a release the Bail (Amdt.) Bill as a critical tool and a strong deterrent in the fight against crime.

4.10 p.m.

If you have not lost your mind you have clearly lost your shame. This is the police; this is the police service, none of us could go out there and fight crimes and criminals. [*Crosstalk*] This is the head of the police service charged with the responsibility—

Madam President: Minister, Sen. Ameen, this is the last time I am cautioning anybody about the crosstalk, eh, last time. Continue Minister.

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: This is the head of the police service, no less a person than the Commissioner of Police saying to us as legislators, this is what we want, and six of you said no. I am waiting to see, as I warned you the night when we did the Motion on the prison officers and their safety, I am waiting to see what you will say to the Commissioner on the Firearms (Amdt.) Bill, because we are charged here with the responsibility primarily of crafting the tools that will allow law enforcement in the country to do what it believes it has to do in relation to the fight against crime.

And, Madam President, this Motion, notwithstanding all the—I cannot describe it, in the recitals, calls on the Government to do one thing, and that is to lay, to table a cogent strategic crime prevention plan to address the levels of crime. Well, Madam President, even before coming into Government, the Government set up the framework of a plan, and I know my friends will not readily read the PNM Manifesto but it is a document of public policy, and no matter how much you “wine and grine” you cannot stray from the reality that the PNM’s manifesto set out the five critical areas in relation to the fight against crime.

And if I asked anyone of you to give me an idea what are those five things you may not be able to do so, because to come and call for a plan to be laid tells me you have not been following. You have been shooting in the dark, and no

wonder you make these terrible errors in judgment. Imagine when the anti-gang— I have heard you talk about the anti-gang and nothing is happening with the anti-gang legislation, why do you not talk about the public shaming that brought you back to the Parliament to help the Government pass the anti-gang legislation because that is what happened. You came to the Parliament with no intention. Having gotten our support when you were in Government, you came to the Parliament with no intention of supporting anti-gang legislation, and when the Bill failed without your support and the public turned on you, then, in an unprecedented manner, you brought yourself back into the Parliament, you assisted us by waiving the Standing Order that says that we cannot come back in less than six months, and in one of the shortest debates in the Parliament on a piece of legislation so substantial in the Lower House, there were two speakers and two speakers alone: the hon. Attorney General who moved and the Leader of the Opposition who spoke on behalf of the Opposition, and thereafter it ended. And of course in this House there were 29 votes for and none against, you were shamed by then.

You were shamed into coming into the Parliament and doing what is right, and it is for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, who also asked for that piece of legislation, to take the steps using the tools provided, not by us, the legislators, by we the people; we the taxpayers by providing the tools that are required. And when you go, when you ask about a plan, the PNM, in its manifesto, set out the six key areas: number one, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. That was number one because we recognized the absence of leadership in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service had serious repercussions. The absence of leadership led to a position where the manpower of the police service was not targeted to the key areas of crime. Forget the numbers, forget whether we had the strength, the full strength, what we had in the police service was not directed in the areas that

required action. And go back to your tenure, go back to your time in Government and you would see; you would see in the police service at least 10 per cent of the service was on leave, many on study leave.

You would see in the critical crime fighting areas less than 50 per cent of the positions were filled. So in tackling the police service the Government recognized a few things: one, that it had to deal with the issue of leadership. And I do not know if you did it willingly, unwillingly, inadvertently, but a Police Commissioner is in place, and I do not know if you agree or disagree, but the public seems to feel that leadership exists in the police service in a manner that did not exist for several years before. The Government undertook a manpower audit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and laid the report in this House, pointing to serious technical deficiencies in the police service, pointing to serious issues in the police service in relation, for example, to the abuse of overtime, to officers' hours not being accounted for, to training and several other factors in relation to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

So the Government has not been blind to the number one priority, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. And, most importantly, the Government has listened to what the service is telling us in relation to the type of legislation that has to be brought, and I will remind you very shortly. Number two was this issue of border protection, and thankfully some of us have decent memories because you seem to have forgotten what was the point of the OPVs. You seem to have forgotten that. And you talk—Sen. Obika talks about a regional presence, well, the OPVs were meant to do that. The OPVs were meant to allow law enforcement to stay offshore for long periods and to service territorial waters going right up to Puerto Rico. It was not a cheap investment but it was an investment guided by all the technical people, and a significant amount of effort and money. I do not know if you

understand that there were about 200 officers through different periods of time sent abroad, particularly in England, for training. Some living away from their families for a year to be trained to operate the OPVs and all the supporting equipment on the OPVs, and all that investment went down the drain.

So when you talk about border protection, consider what you left for us coming in and consider what your dismantling of the OPVs has done in relation to border protection. And, of course, what have we done?—The Government has ordered new vessels, and you have gone to the length and breadth to interfere with the work being done with the Australians. You have committed yourself to mischief to try to find fault with the Government's purchase of the vessels that are needed. We had 14 vessels, Coast Guard vessels that would support the larger vessels down in the west, they were unserviceable. Some were of no use, and those which were serviceable, the Government has brought back into operation.

Why do you not talk about the Agusta Westland helicopters? Do you realize that among the many contractual commitments in relation to the Agusta Westland is an expensive provision in the contract to train locals to take over the operation of those helicopters? And do you realize that you failed a simple thing as putting locals in place to be trained to take over the operation of Agusta Westland? You failed to do that. And what did we do? Well, we recognized, because none of you—none of you can come to this Senate and say to the country what those Agusta Westland helicopters did in relation to crime fighting. And this Government, recognizing that we cannot afford it, we could not afford that, in as much as it may have been nice to have on some occasions. We could not have afforded it, grounded the fleet and have decided to pursue other ways of providing support in the air for law enforcement on the ground.

You talk about looking for the forensic centre, going up to St. Augustine or St.

Joseph and looking for the centre, why do you not go Carlsen Field and look for all your Ministry of Justice buildings that you were building down there? Why do you not do that? The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has a commitment with the Chinese to support the establishment of the Forensic Science Centre, we have other commitments in relation to the DNA lab and we have other commitments in relation to the Forensic Science Centre, because if you walk to the Forensic Science Centre, if you go in there you cannot point to anything in the form of equipment or personnel that you added during your five-year term; you cannot. The Forensic Science Centre did not even receive a coat of paint, and when you get into building, designing, working with international partners to identify the site, to acquire the site, to design, to build, it would not happen overnight, but on the issue of improving, what we call in the manifesto, improving police science, the Government has addressed the issue of the DNA lab, forensic lab. And, most importantly, after you passed the DNA legislation in 2011, what did you do? Absolutely nothing.

So the Government brought to this Senate the DNA regulations. The Government has taken steps to hire the people who are required to give effect to the DNA legislation and the Government is moving. We have brought subsequent legislation dealing with DNA. The fourth area in the manifesto dealt with the Judiciary and every time we bring a piece of legislation in this Parliament that remotely touches and concerns the Judiciary we have a whole set of bacchanal in relation to the Judiciary. But we have brought our legislation; we have brought what has been asked from us by the Judiciary, the things that they are required to do and to improve the way in which justice is managed, and I will get to some of that legislation soon.

And then the fifth area, when you mention the prisons there are two things that

come to mind, that enormous expenditure to convert those Santa Rosa warehouses into something of a prison. That is the first thing that comes to mind. But I wanted in the context, Sen. Obika, of that plan you want to see appear before us, I wonder if you will do to that plan what you did to a report that you commissioned because I did not hear you mention “No Time to Quit: Engaging Youth at Risk” that your Government commissioned. And once you had it in hand, obviously you put it away to gather dust, because from 2013 to 2015 no one heard about that report.

A very detailed report but, most importantly, a report that addressed the issue of the prisons, and it is not the only report but it is a report commissioned by you, and nowhere you could show me that having commissioned and received a report like that you did anything to implement the report. So my opening is to say to you, one, the Government in its campaign articulated the elements of a plan to deal with crime, nothing has changed, and throughout, from 2015 to now, we have been coming to this Parliament, and we have been in other places in the country but I am talking about the Parliament now, we have been here dealing with the issue of crime.

And this is what we have done: we laid gambling legislation, and that piece of legislation has sat in committee since it has been laid in 2016, but I asked you before and I say to you now, I wait to see your attitude towards the gambling legislation because you have not talked about what causes the crime and what is mingled on the crime, you know. But I am on record as a writer and in this Senate as saying that crime and money and the greed are indivisible, and gambling, all the law enforcement reports point to a link between what is happening in the country in relation to illegal gambling and a link with crime and criminal behaviour.

So, I want to see your attitude when that legislation eventually—because if something as obvious as bail, begged for by a Commissioner of Police, does not

capture your support, I do not imagine you will have an interest in stemming the multibillion-dollar flow of illegal funds via gaming houses in this country. The SSA amendment, we brought that, you criticized, you focused on personalities; well, if there was ever a personality emerging from the world of the SSA is Resmi. And you know—[*Interruption*] Yes, because the mere fact that she could have been selected tells me something about the people who made that decision, and you have no shame. You have no shame about it.

We brought whistle-blower legislation, and what would whistle-blowers do? Whistle-blowers will alert somebody to the existence of crime and criminal behaviour, and what was your attitude towards that legislation? When you reflect on it, why did you not support and why do you not support whistle-blower legislation in country? Why something so simple, you do not support legislation like that? We brought the cybercrime recognizing, again, particularly as it relates to minors, and we have a report right now in the country, a very live report of somebody who has been sought in relation to an alleged incident in Siparia, and the cybercrime legislation continues to suffer in committee because there is no desire. There is no desire on your part to bring it to life.

Sen. S. Hosein: Madam President, Standing Order 49(2), anticipation of a Bill or Motion, please.

Madam President: Minister—[*Interruption*] Yeah. So, Minister, can you move on because those matters are still to come to the—

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: Thank you very much, Madam President.

Madam President, this one is not to come, the Trial by Judge Alone, which is now law, I remember my friends on the opposite side; I remember their attitude to that Bill that it would not work. That it would do nothing to the criminal justice system, and, of course, I thank them for their support, we went into a select

committee and came out with a Bill that was acceptable to the House. And, Madam President, upon proclamation it did not take very long—it did not take very long for us to have the first trial by judge alone in this country. In 2018, Madam President, we brought the legislation to deal with the Criminal Division, and that is in relation to requests made by the Judiciary, how the Judiciary wanted the courts to be structured, how the Judiciary said to us that this is going to ease the caseload, this is going to ease the case management, the criminal justice cases, and so on.

Madam President: Minister.

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: Thank you very much, Madam President.

Madam President: So, hon. Senators, we will suspend the sitting and return at 5.00 p.m. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, you have utilized 25 minutes of your speaking time.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m. *Sitting resumed.*

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

Mr. Vice-President: Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, you have 15 more minutes.

Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. Mr. Vice-President, when we took the break I was making the point that, primarily, in the context of what my colleague, Sen. Obika, asked for in this Motion that we, the Government, tabled in the shortest possible time a cogent strategic crime prevention plan, and I made the point that the PNM, during its campaign, in its manifesto, set out the framework of the key elements of what we intended to do in relation to dealing with crime. I was also making the point that an important element of that is the legislation that must be passed in order to give law

enforcement in particular, but the Judiciary and the other elements, the opportunity to be successful in dealing with this issue of crime. Before I close, by reference to the legislation, I just want to go back to two points that were raised by Sen. Haynes. The first is that somehow Sen. Haynes got confused.

I want to use that word “confused”, in relation to the Minister of National Security talking about his interaction alongside the Prime Minister with some of our external stakeholders, and Sen. Haynes made the point that the Minister of National Security was only appointed last year, 2018, and could not have been properly reporting his interaction with some of our foreign counterparts. I just want to remind Sen. Haynes that from the outset, not long after the Government came in, in September 2015, Minister Young had been appointed and is still appointed a Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister and had been until his appointment as Minister of National Security, a Minister in the Office of the Attorney General, and had been interacting with, you know, our foreign counterparts, local counterparts, and a lot of people who the Prime Minister's office or the Attorney General's office would have been dealing with and is well positioned to talk not only on national security but the wider range of matters in relation to the Government.

The next thing, Mr. Vice-President, is this point that was made about the Government dismantling the community policing programme, and I just want to remind people, people who have forgotten the experience of the community policing, and I am not doing a disservice or saying anything negative about those private security officers all unarmed who were charged with the responsibility of moving through communities and interacting, but the fact is that they were unarmed, they were not trained in policing, and the opportunity for them to really give the sort of support and service in the rural communities and communities across the country really did not exist. And one of the ways of dealing with that

was the Government's promise to enlist 100 municipal police officers for each of the municipalities, a total of 1,400, and we have done that, recognizing that people who come from communities who are armed with all the police powers and all the tools, and so on, to do the job of police officers are better able to interact in communities with which they are familiar and also to provide significant support to law enforcement.

So when you compare the use of additional SRPs, municipal police and the strengthening of the manpower within the existing Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, I think you have a better opportunity than relying on contracted private security officers who have nothing more than a baton moving around in communities which may provide some service but also present to themselves significant danger. Mr. Vice-President, in dealing with some of the criminal behaviour, in dealing with some of the requests from the Judiciary, and in dealing with some of the requests from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Government has introduced several pieces of legislation. One, for example, is a simple amendment to long-standing, or I could even say ancient legislation of the Trespass Act, but that targeted a particular type of criminal behaviour, that is people who would invade houses, including state-owned houses, but also people who, in my own experience as Minister with responsibility for lands, people who will go on land without permission, people who will go on the beaches; sometime there are structures going up on some of the beaches on the east coast.

The Chairman of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation has been complaining recently about the pervasiveness of squatting in some areas where you would not ordinarily meet squatters, and there was need to strengthen the hand of law enforcement; there was need to impose greater fines, to increase the likely prison term so that you create a deterrent and you also give the police the sort of law that

they would be able to enforce that did not exist before, and that was a simple piece of legislation. But from my perspective as a Minister with law enforcement units in a Ministry, that amendment to the Trespass Act was a significant amendment.

Mr. Vice-President, the Government dealt on the issue of white collar crime, very controversially, some people were angry and some people were upset, but the legislation dealing with explaining your wealth and the legislation dealing with non-profit organizations are very important pieces of legislation in the fight against crime in what is corruption but also the issue of anti-terrorism measures. And what we have seen in the country, based on the reports from the FIU, the increased—I have directed attention to it before—the increased frequency of attempts to use the local financial institutions for the purpose of funding terrorist activity.

We introduced legislation to make an amendment to the Companies Act to deal with the issue of beneficial ownership, because, Mr. Vice-President, the crime is not just what my colleague, the hon. Attorney General called blood crimes, the crime relates to a number of behaviours in the society. So, for example, within my portfolio we have had to increase the fines in relation to illegal hunting, for example. We had to be more vigilant and increase our law enforcement in relation to the illegal wildlife trade. While some of my colleagues are focused on the illegal movement of persons and human trafficking, and so on, some are focused on the illegal movement and guns and drugs, and so on, my portfolio requires me to focus on the illegal movement of animals which forms part of criminal behaviour.

So the legislation, the legislative agenda on the Government in relation to crime and fighting crime has ranged from, what sounds simple, in relation to wildlife conservation and the illegal wildlife trade to what is on the high end, the anti-gang, anti-terrorism, explain your wealth, and the other things which we are required to

comply with in relation to FATF and CFATF. And I could tell you, I mean, I do not have to remind my friends, they understand that from 2010 to 2015 they did very little to impact the country's score sheet in relation to CFATF and FATF. The level of compliance with the recommendations was very low and some of the things that may have been doable, like the changes to the credit union legislation, the changes to NPOs, and so on, were simply not done, and successive reports pointed to our failure to comply.

5.10 p.m.

What we have been doing in this House and in the other place in relation to all different elements of crime, the Government has brought the appropriate legislation, sometimes with support of my friends and sometimes without support of my friends. We dealt with the Sexual Offences (Amdt.) Bill and, again, it is the work of not this side alone, but the three Benches, and that forms part of the fight against crime, the requirement to do what other modern societies have done. The requirement to create a registry, but also through the work of the three Benches, to afford some protection and some restriction in terms of the access to that, and also allow somebody whose name should be listed to challenge, to show cause why it should not be listed and at some stage also have an opportunity to expunge.

So, Madam President, I think this Motion fails simply because it asks us to lay a plan, and I believe that the Government has articulated a plan long before it came into Government. It has been consistent in dealing with first the police service in terms of the appointment of a leader, and other things in relation to the police service including the manpower audit.

It has dealt with border protection to bring back vessels which were lying idle and unserviceable to bring them back as a short-term measure; to contract four new vessels from Australia; to turn, in relation to what we call "police science" in the

manifesto, to set things in train for a new Forensic Science Centre; to bring the regulations for DNA and also do the personnel side of it of hiring people, and also do the infrastructure of moving towards the construction of the lab. We have done significant amount of work, whether it is in the area of children, whether it is in the Criminal Division.

When you look at the report from the Judiciary every year, Mr. Vice-President, you see that as much as we talk about crime, you see the Magistracy being occupied by the number of traffic offences—50,000 new matters every year, and by changing the motor vehicle road traffic legislation to allow for spot speed cameras and to allow for other ways of dealing with traffic offences, we are likely to reduce the load on the Magistracy.

Finally, in relation to the prison, I myself sat on a JSC alongside my colleague Sen. Chote and other Senators. We interviewed the people from the prison. The prison is not an easy issue to tackle, but the Government has been dealing with some of the infrastructure issues. Some of the issues relating to the reduction in the need for prisoner transport, and some of the other things relating to the personnel, like the jamming of phone calls, equipment to the prison officers, the protection of law enforcement officers, which is the subject of another Bill, and the Government has been doing the things that it believes has to be done.

The issue is that while all this work gets done, the society, and even I have talked about it, the issue of personal safety remains large on the minds of Trinidadians and Tobagonians, but I do not think, in support of all the law enforcement people in the country, particularly those in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, you can say that the Government has failed on the matter of crime.

I thank you.

Sen. Paul Richards: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, for recognizing me and

allowing me to participate in this Motion:

Whereas the responsibility of a Government is to ensure public safety and security through the maintenance of law and order;

And whereas the Government has failed to address the extraordinary increase in the level of crime in Trinidad and Tobago, in particular murders and other violent crimes, which are negatively affecting national peace and economic development;

Be it resolved that the Senate take note of the Government's failure to arrest the increasing and unacceptable levels of criminal activity in Trinidad and Tobago;

And be it further resolved that the Senate call on the Government to table in the shortest possible time a cogent Strategic Crime Prevention Plan to address the unacceptable levels of crime facing the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me start by saying this Motion could be applied to any of the last five administrations in Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Ameen: What!

Sen. P. Richards: Any of the last five administrations this Motion could be applied to—any of the last five. Let me start by saying that. I say that in starting by taking you back to November 28, 2001, when I was working on a radio station then, it happened to be the number one morning show in the country, with my friend Nikki Crosby, and I was reversing out of my garage at 4.30 a.m. While reversing I saw in my peripheral vision a car pull up behind me, two cars actually. So I stopped and thought well, somebody is just passing in the street at 4.30 a.m. I usually worked at 5.30 at that time.

So I stopped, I saw the cars stopped, and I said, okay well the car stopped, so this

is probably a robbery. I saw two persons alight from the vehicles with guns, and at that point I said, "Stay calm Paul, it is just a robbery." So I put my hands up, because the window was down, and one person came on either side of the front of car, and the person on the driver's side, which is my side, pointed the gun at my head. I said, "Take the car and everything in it, it does not matter to me." He said, "No, turn off the engine." I turned off the engine. "Move over to the passenger side." I complied, and a third person came and sat in the backseat while the driver side assailant went into the driver's seat, and they proceeded to, at gunpoint, take me on a drive down south.

I am saying this in the context of this Motion because it is about crime. I dare anyone else to—I know Sen. Chote yesterday outlined she was held up twice at gun point, and I know other Members of this honourable House and members of the community at large, the national community, would have experienced all sorts of degrees of crime. So I say this from a personal perspective. I was taken on a slow drive, quiet drive to South.

When they reached the point of the crematorium, they turned left and went into the crematorium. At that point I said, "This is it." I started to pray for my family—my mother in particular—that this would be an easy pill for her to swallow. They drove into the crematorium area, and I started to pray for a quick demise, because there was a gun to the left temple and a gun to the back of my head. The car stopped, and another person came out and said, "Partner, say yuh prayers, yuh know, because you eh leaving here today". So I continued to pray.

This was 2001, keep it in mind. So all the blame game going on in here, I say it is enough to pass around. Mr. Vice-President, excuse me if I sound angry and emotional sometimes, because this is a very personal experience, and I am not absolving myself because there are many other citizens who face this on a daily

basis in Trinidad and Tobago.

By the pure grace and beauty of Almighty God, that man said, "We came to kill you, but I do not think you deserve this because it is not you we want. You know who we want, and we are going to let you go to tell who we want, if we cannot get him, we will get his soldiers."

I would not go into more detail because I do not want to drag too many people who are not here into the conversation. The person in the back exited the vehicle. The person in the passenger side exited the vehicle, and they said, "Drive slowly out of here." Even at that point I am expecting a hail of gunfire, because I "ain't think ah getting away so easy". I slowly put the car in drive, and I drove out slowly expecting not to make it to the end. This is inside the crematorium, eh. "Dey ent carrying you for a drive to the crematorium to scare yuh. They carrying you to kill yuh," and it is by the grace of God, as I said, I was out of there.

I reached slowly out, "ah" say, "Ah boy Paul, yuh still alive." Out slowly to the highway, and I pulled up at the side of the highway, and I cried like a baby, not because I was upset or sad, but because I was so angry.

I went to work, got to work early, worked the shift on the radio with Nikki Crosby; no one knew. At the end of the shift I called the principals and told them what happened, and the rest is history.

I say that to say that while many politicians talk about crime should not be used as a political tool, and again and again that is exactly what politicians do, over and over; and the population is fed up. Because as I said at the start of this, no administration can absolve themselves of this failure in this Motion, because thousands of people have died and are dying, and they are being assaulted and they are being raped, and they are being kidnapped every year in Trinidad and Tobago. So while I appreciate the statistics of reduced crime and a 50 per cent drop in the

overall crime, it means nothing to the families of the victims—nothing.

So we need to stop this nonsense and this never ending ping-pong of a blame game in this country. Let us start with that in this country, because we cannot go nowhere with that. The Manning administration blamed the Robinson administration. The Panday administration blamed the Manning administration again. The People's Partnership blamed the Manning, and now the Rowley administration is blaming the PP and the UNC is blaming back the Rowley. When will it end? When will it end?

I do not know if we realize that every administration also promises to fix and solve it, and return us to a sense of safety and security, but we have all collectively continued to fail for the simple reason that is not PNM fault or UNC fault, or NAR fault. It is our collective faults and our collective responsibilities. It is my theory that this anarchy started in 1990 when an act of treason went unpunished in Trinidad and Tobago and legitimized anarchy, and though millions have been spent on a commission of enquiry, no one to date has been held legally responsible.

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

So to every little gun-toting idiot out there, "I will get away with it". If I could hold up a Parliament, shoot a Prime Minister in the leg, hold up a TV station, kill people on the streets, shut down a country and create anarchy, push a country back 20 years and get away with it, crime is the order of the day. So let us not kid ourselves in Trinidad and Tobago, the blame game is not going to help us solve this.

The reasons I will proffer are, one, we continue to look at crime in siloed, one-dimensional approaches. So while we all know what the individual components of our criminality is in Trinidad and Tobago, like most other jurisdictions, because we are not unique, we continue to think it is this, it is that, it is this, it is that and we

are not working in a multidimensional approach in most cases. We have made some progress, but you know what? The criminals are making more progress than us. So if we move ahead five steps, the criminals move ahead seven steps. We seem always behind the curve.

We think increasing penalties will deter crimes, and increasing penalty alone will not deter crime. It is part of the solution, but if I think I will not be caught, penalties mean nothing to me. If I think I will just go on remand and spend 10, 15 years and get three square a day, have access to cell phones and parties, what is the big deal? They have a different moral compass and life expectancy than us. So telling them you are going and put them in jail and remand for 15 years, or giving them 25 years really means nothing to them, because as we have seen through you, Madam President, recently they are calling hits and running the racket behind bars. So all right, so okay, I in jail, but that “ent diminishing meh overall standard of living” or my negative influence on society. So if we feel putting them in jail for 15 to 25 years, and the ones who will come out, and not a proper rehabilitation programme, we are spinning top in mud.

So what we should be doing is focusing on who the criminals are in various categories. Not the easy knee-jerk reaction of the little black boys in the hot spots. We have started to make progress in terms of dealing with some aspects of white collar crime, but we seem timid and afraid to bring down—and I want to be careful in saying this because I do not want to paint business as bad—the few elements in business that are pretending to be legitimate business. And I say “few” deliberately, because I do not want to send the wrong message of painting the business community as the enemy in Trinidad and Tobago; the few, and we have all heard the stories.

The mechanisms for preventing crime and maintaining law and order, and those

are social mechanisms as well as law enforcement mechanisms. The crippled criminal justice system, specifically the crumbling courts falling behind the curves as we speak in terms of backlogs and an inability to holistically assess its own shortcomings, and even try to deal with correcting the issues in a systematic and measurable manner, because that is a big part of the problem.

Four, an education system that has not kept up with progressive global trends, and is wont to delusion of equality of treatment of all students, because all students are not treated equally in our education system. Let us not kid ourselves, and that is a big part of the problem, and I will get into that a little more later on. An education system which has unwittingly contributed to the criminology in Trinidad and Tobago by its inadequacies, and its marginalization of certain students and certain groups as part of a class divide in Trinidad and Tobago. It fails thousands of students every year at both the primary and secondary school level, if the student manages to go through the both levels, because there is a huge drop-out rate between primary and secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

Five, broken families and communities. Religious bodies who pour scorn on Government and society, while not acknowledging their own failings. NGOs who are not included in the decision-making process in a sustainable manner, and in a manner that understands and acknowledges their worth in the contribution to this in Trinidad and Tobago. Because, the NGO sector in this country has a lot to contribute, not just to consultation but to actually actively solving the problem, and they are not being absorbed and incorporated effectively. And also, as I said before, some, few business entities that are less concerned with their own contribution to the restoration of the social fabric and profits at all cost, sometimes being themselves the unchecked and deliberately ignored white collar criminal bastions, and I underscore again, a few, not some.

So I ask the question through you, Madam President, when will we realize we are all to blame? We are all collectively responsible. So bringing a Motion against the Government “doh do nothing for me, you know, it doh excite me at all”, because that is just finger pointing. When will we realize that no solution can be effective unless we accept collective responsibility? And not just say we are responsible, really understand how we contribute to this continuing or increasing, because it is not just continuing, it is increasing, and take collective, sustained, restorative action.

Madam President, I did not have to go far to get some data for this contribution today. One is by someone I really have a great deal of respect for, who sat in this honourable Chamber as an Independent Senator in the Third, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Republican Parliament, Prof. Ramesh Deosaran, an internationally renowned scholar in criminology, social sciences.

And also a document titled, “No time to quit: Engaging Youth at Risk, Executive Report of the Committee on Young Males and Crime in Trinidad and Tobago”, 2013, by Professor Selwyn Ryan who was the Chair, and others, Dr. Indira Rampersad, Prof. Patricia Mohammed and Dr. Marjorie Thorpe.

These documents have so much in common. Let us start with the definition of “hot spot” in Trinidad and Tobago, and how that approach has continued to support and intensify the class divisions in Trinidad and Tobago, while not making any dent in the crime situation. A hot spot definition is really defined by who defines it and what their value systems are. Because if we had an egalitarian system of hot spot determination, it would not only be Laventille and Chaguanas, “yuh know”. We would go west and we would go south, and we would define “hot spots” differently, but we are not doing that because our value system “doh” support that. It is easier to look for the low hanging fruit, the little black boys in Laventille and

the little boys in central and the gangs, or the so-called gangs. But “it have” other kinds of gangs too, eh. “It have” corporate gangs too who are going unchecked.

The proliferation of gangs and gang life, and the fact that the failings of the many socializing agents in Trinidad and Tobago, starting with the families that have been broken down for several different reasons, the school system which I will get to in more detail later on, time permitting, the religious bodies that as I said like talk, but “doh” act as much as they talk, or look at their own shortcomings. The media, of which I am a part, which has played a significant role in undermining social values in Trinidad and Tobago while at the same time doing a lot of good. Let me not demonize it totally. And the larger community and influences us as legislators, and the examples they see or do not see in us. The kind of behaviours we display which they mimic without us knowing. And how all this has come into the milieu of what we see today and are trying to deal with today.

So, recommendations for decades coming out of these documents include: the National Security Ministry diligently pursuing white collar criminals in all sectors of society, including law enforcement. Because while we have a new Commissioner of Police, some progress has been made, and I know there is due process to go through in terms of identifying corrupt and damaging law enforcement in the police service, the prisons, all arms of national security, because they all contribute to what we see today. That is very important because we still have issues.

Although the Minister of National Security earlier on spoke about the \$53 million going into dealing with Golden Grove, and I welcome that because like the Minister, I did not go to Tobago, but I went to Port of Spain, and I went to that hell hole in Arouca. I do not know how anyone can talk about restorative justice and rehabilitation while you are housing 3,000 plus remandees, not convicted of any

crime, with quite possibly the reason to be there, because the criminal justice system has determined through our laws that they meet the threshold for being detained, but not under those conditions. And when you are remandee for 14 years or 13 years under those conditions, there is absolutely no way, as my colleague Sen. Deyalsingh will tell you, that you are coming out a better person, that you are coming out ready to make a positive contribution to society. They are coming out angry and they are coming out for revenge.

The unchecked contraband that keeps going into the prisons in Trinidad and Tobago that facilitates hits in Trinidad and Tobago. I have heard so many decades of jammers and “scammers”, and you really have to wonder if we are really serious, because officers refusing to go through basic security checks to make sure that they are not carrying contraband, systems in place to make sure that visitors do not take in contraband, effective systems—yes you see one or two people ever so often being identified as persons carrying contraband, including officers. But really it is a drop in the bucket when you think of what is passing in there and what is available to inmates and detainees in the nation's prisons which is part of the problem.

It is a school for criminology, our prisons, and if we do not take a hard look at that and it is not only about improving the infrastructure, it is about dealing with a system where we fix that remand problem, because \$53 million is not going to fix the remand problem, you know, the remandee problem. It might get them a little better facilities in which to be housed, but it is not really fixing the remand problem. That is an issue for the courts. I do not want to run afoul of a Standing Order, but in a debate coming up I will talk more about that in terms of what can be effective.

Looking at the police service and what has been able to be done in London,

because they had a real corruption problem in the 80s and 90s too. Jamaica, right there, faced with basically an international shut down when Christopher “Dudus” Coke had CNN cameras following a siege in Kingston many years ago, and they have now, to some level, rehabilitated Buju Banton being caught in that net, but they were forced to make changes, because it meant economic sanction and hardship for the people. They did not have a choice, but we still seem to be at some level thinking we have a choice, and we could carry on as we are carrying on. We have to bring the criminal element under control.

I saw a news article quoting the Commissioner of Police saying—I think it is day before yesterday, I apologize, Madam President, because I am taking it from memory. I think it is a *Newsday* report of day before yesterday quoting the Commissioner of Police as saying there are 50 shooters out there. Okay, so we know there are 50 shooters out there. Why are they not in jail? The Attorney General through you, Madam President, identified someone by moniker in the last debate as a known gang person accusing, pelting accusations. Why is that person not in jail? I know there is a difference between intelligence and evidence, but if we have all this overwhelming information about who the criminal element is for so many decades, why are so many gang leaders still outside creating havoc? What is the shortcoming?

Madam President: Sen. Richards, you have five more minutes.

Sen. P. Richards: It cannot be. Let me move quickly to the education system, because you all know that is my pet peeve.

A class divided education system which severely lacks equality. Denominational versus Government schools, the prestige system, “I am better than you.” “You duncee, I bright. My family better than yours.” That is what our system has done for years, and it has marginalized about 3,500 to 5,000 students—

Madam President: Sen. Richards, I apologize. You will finish at 5.53.

Sen. P. Richards: Thank you, I was wondering. Thank you very much, Madam President. Thank you for the correction.

An education system that has continued to fail us as a nation. A system that is not student-centred, and does not treat students as individuals, but treats them in “graps”. So if I have a particular gift, primarily academic, and you have a particular gift, you are—because when I went to Hillview College we were the science students, so we were the bright boys, and the rejects were the art students. But you know what? The art students are now lawyers, which is a good and a bad thing in some instances. [*Laughter*]

5.40 p.m.

Unfortunately, students are not one homogenous group. [*Laughter*] I apologize to the attorneys, I do not mean any ill will. As I have said, there is good and bad in every sector in society including broadcasters and media people.

Hon. Senator: The Opposition will come out for you.

Sen. P. Richards: I know. Anyway, you have to be concerned about a system that is not able to look in a really objective, diagnostic way at 3,500 to 5,000 students that fall below the cracks every year. A system that is more concerned with patting itself on the back, no matter what Minister is in the office for the last 15/20 years, and running to the schools with the best performing SEA students and taking pictures for the media. And I am not saying that about any particular education Minister, I am saying it about all in the last 20 years because we “done know” the protocol already. SEA results, it is coming up just now.

Hon. Senator: Friday.

Sen. P. Richards: SEA results, Friday; Saturday morning, picture in the papers. And I have no problem with acknowledging the good work of students who have

worked hard and excelled, eh, but the bigger issue is those that have fallen below the cracks and why they are falling below the cracks, and providing empirical diagnostics to ensure that we find out where they went wrong before they reach secondary school, so that we do not pass them on to secondary school as a bigger issue because what you are doing is destroying their self-esteem. You are calling them a failure for the first 14, 15 years of their lives. An education system that is more concerned with testing students than testing teachers and the systems, because there are entire education districts in Trinidad and Tobago that are falling below the 30 per cent benchmark in SEA.

And the hon. Minister of Education came here and responded to a Motion I presented a couple months ago, and he said, he was very clear, he schooled me a bit and I am appreciative of it, that the SEA is a placement examination, and the 30 per cent is a benchmark for placement. Well, if we are celebrating 30 per cent, we are not global people, we are not going to be globally competitive because that it is not what they are competing with globally. And I am not saying he is to blame, do not get me wrong, I am not personalizing this. I am saying, we have to find out why so many students are falling below the 40 per cent benchmark because there are issues with students who have made 40 per cent, they have not grasped effectively 60 per cent of the curriculum; that is what that says on a fundamental level, you know. If you make really 30 per cent, it means you really understand 30 per cent, 70 per cent escaped you.

So when you transfer that from primary school to secondary school and the curriculum gets more challenging, imagine how that student feels. So we have to deal with that, there is no reason why we should have this class system, we should not belittle the denominational schools, we should try to understand.

And I think Dr. Rhoda Reddock and others from UWI's Faculty of Social Sciences

have done extensive research on why denominational schools do better. They have better sources, they have better systems, the socialization is different, they have better PTA systems and it works as a collective. Why can we not transplant what is working there to the government schools, because education, and ironically, national security, usually go neck and neck in terms of budgetary allocations every year for the last 15 or so years, so it is not an issue of money. It is an issue of what we are doing and how we are doing it, and if we do not solve that problem, we are basically handing over about possibly 2,000 to 3,000 students every year to a gang leader that is going to validate them, to a gang leader that is going to give a sense of accomplishment through illegal means, because the formal system has told them that, "I doh want you, you eh worth nothing", and that is exactly how gangs prosper in any jurisdiction.

Gangs offer what a family, a society and a community fail to provide to every individual. I think it was one of the Opposition Senators who quoted Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which is well known, the five levels, and if you do not get past each level, you have problems. So if you do not have food and water, "doh tell me nothing" about studying, and if you do not have emotional and psychological security, I cannot reach self-actualization, they have to go cumulatively, and we are not providing the support for these students.

I was really happy, Madam President, to see—Trinidad is a really funny country, you know. The Government opened a swimming pool over the weekend and you would swear it was the worst thing in the world. And I am shocked as to the negativity surrounding the opening of a swimming pool, and I understand the political environment in which we operate, but even if it took 20 years, 15 years, let us rejoice, "nah", they got a swimming pool, and something good, that is something good. But it had become by Sunday's talk shows and Monday morning,

the ire of so much conflict, a sporting facility which can provide so much good in any community has been used as a political weapon, and I am not identifying the UNC here, I am saying in general conversation.

If we could use something positive so negatively, what does it say about us as a country? Why are we surprised that we are where we are? And that is the general issue facing us as a country, we cannot seem to get past wanting to be in power and stay in power or wanting to get into power at the behest of what is the national interest. I stood back and I said wow!—and then that translates into whether we think we should unite in the fight against crime or as I started in my contribution, whether we should point fingers and blame; you said you would do this and we said we did this, and we this and you did that. When is it going to end? Madam President, what time do I end? Sorry.

Madam President: 5.53.

Sen. P. Richards: 5.53. So I have a couple more minutes, seven more minutes. I want to end by looking at, and I have not got through half of it, but the issue of prison reform is very dear to me also because it also has to go with, to me, part of the education system. And the fact that, as I said before, it is important to improve the infrastructure in terms of the \$53million as outlined by the hon. Minister of National Security, and that is commendable, and upgrade the legal framework as we are doing very often in this honourable House, but we cannot divest restorative justice to only Wayne Chance, because that is basically what we have done, and he is going a great job, do not get me wrong. He has turned his life around and he has turned it into a positive thing in society.

But I get the impression that that is the State's answer to restorative justice, and it is not in the prisons or the systems, and I have said this on many occasions, because we are still calling it a "prison system" and not a "correction system". That

is the start of the problem right there, because other jurisdictions have understood it that a prison is a holding bay, and a correction system has a different connotation and meaning, so let us start with that, and we are not understanding that, in Sweden and Scandinavian countries, prisons are closing down, they have to turn them into schools, which is great because the criminality is so low. We talk about—

Madam President: Sen. Richards, you really now have five minutes. [*Laughter*]

Sen. P. Richards: Thank you, Madam President. We love to talk about Lee Kuan Yew and Singapore, that it seems standard reading for parliamentarians now and what a great job he has done in Singapore, and how he has transformed that society in the same time that we have been independent, 50/55 years. And, you know, I got sent a really wonderful video this past weekend on his three basic policies or principles and philosophies underlined how he approached governing that country and turning it around.

MPH: M is meritocracy, it does not matter who it is, it could be UNC, PNM, COP, MSJ whatever; the most qualified and appropriate person gets the job; it is the only way a country can move forward—meritocracy.

P is pragmatism, and he has combined successfully elements of socialism, which it seems is a bad word because it has been demonized by the West so much. And capitalism, very effectively because in some projects it works, and in some situations it does not work, so he has combined them very well in terms of the way the country moves forward. And the third he said, and this was a professor of public—

Sen. Khan: Public policy.

Sen. P. Richards:—public policy. Thank you, Minister Khan. And the third one is the seemingly simplest and the most difficult. And the third is the H, and that is honesty. And he made an example very early on in his tenure where a public

official went on a business trip with a businessman, and when he came back on the plane, the premier and the authorities were waiting and locked him up. You know why?—because he took a trip paid for by a businessman, a hotel paid for by a businessman and that was considered corruption; that is a normal “day work” in Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Ameen: Hmm.

Sen. P. Richards: Yes, Khadijah, “hmm”, for everybody. And there is nothing wrong with public/private partnership, but it has to be done in format and in a transparent manner and that is the difference. And while we talk about Singapore, we need to do Singapore and not just talk and quote Singapore because it is sounding cute.

So, Madam President, I welcome this Motion, but not possibly for the reasons Sen. Obika intended. I think we really have to stop the blame game and we really have to take collective responsibility and understand that if we do not bridge this political divide and this class divide in Trinidad and Tobago, we will not go anywhere, and we would really have done the coming generations a great disservice in this country. And with these few words, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Ameen. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Khadijah Ameen: Madam President, I want to begin by thanking my colleague Sen. Obika for bringing this Motion and for commending him on the way he piloted the Motion. I have nine minutes in today's private Motion and I intend to utilize all nine, and I will return on the next day that we continue private members' business to continue this debate because there is so much that has to be said about the Government's handling of crime.

This Government and several Members on the opposite side have indicated that

they are working assiduously to fight crime. The Attorney General piloted a Bill to deny persons bail to persons caught with firearms and particularly high-power rifles; the debate for that is in progress. The Minister of National Security was here earlier talking about drug lords and making drug busts. And in the face of this, Madam President, I want to repeat something I said in this House recently in another crime-related debate.

As long as the perception exists, true or untrue, that senior persons in our society are closely affiliated to the criminals and to the drug trade in Trinidad and Tobago, blood will continue to flow in the streets of our nation. As long as there is a perception that justice is for some and not for all, there will continue to be war in the ghettos. As long as you have first class and second class citizens, the 1 per cent versus the 99 per cent, unless we reduce social disadvantages, unless we level the playing field for access to opportunities, we will live under siege. This PNM Government has no moral authority to talk about crime because they are part of the problem.

Madam President, I listened earlier to the Minister of National Security who is also the Minister of Communications who is also a Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General, and I want, as well as—

Sen. Khan: He is not in the AG's office.

Sen. K. Ameen: Sorry. He is the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister; I am guided.

Hon. Senator:—who sometimes acts as AG.

Sen. K. Ameen: Yeah. I know he often acts as Attorney General; so my apology.

Madam President, first off I want to say it is a very dangerous thing that this Government has appointed its Minister of National Security to have the portfolio of Communications. And with communications, with political communications

comes campaigning and propaganda and putting forward your truth versus the truth. That, Madam President, is a dangerous thing [*Desk thumping*] and we have seen the Minister get into trouble for it.

There is a popular quote, “if you repeat a lie enough it becomes the truth”, and it is referred to as a law of propaganda and it is attributed to the Nazi, Joseph Goebbels, [*Crosstalk*] it is German. Yes. It is Goebbels. Right? So, Joseph Goebbels was the Minister of Propaganda or communications in the Nazi Government in 1933 to 1945, and amongst psychologists it is known as the illusion of truth effect—my psychologist friend there. So when a population experiences a bombardment of information with a political objective, it is not necessarily always truth. But I want to advise Trinidad and Tobago, you do not have to be subjected to the barrage of information from the Government, there is hope, and the fact that the repetition of this information could make it appear to be truth, and understanding that can help you from falling for propaganda. So to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, “stay woke”, stay aware, stay informed.

The Minister has often chastised users of social media, when the truth is, sometimes social media is the place where you get unfiltered information because very often media houses have political affiliations and political alignment.

The Minister of National Security, Madam President, I want to deal with some of his misinformation, there was so much. My colleague, Sen. Haynes, I must commend her, she dealt with [*Desk thumping*] some of the misinformation, but there was such a tremendous amount of misinformation in that contribution that it is beyond one person alone to respond.

The Minister spoke of a decrease in number of reports of serious crime and violent crime. He spoke about 908 less reports and so on. I noticed, Madam President, that he said that there was a decrease in crime—he said that there was a decrease in

reports, not a decrease in crime. And I want to ask the question and I believe him, I believe him because so many times you hear of robberies, you even see things on social media, you know friends who experienced home invasions, robberies walking down the street, robberies when they go out and they do not bother to report it. This brings me to ask the question about what the Government has been doing to help the police to deal with the public distrust.

It is known, it is a well-established fact, I think, that there is a distrust of the police, and trust is defined as a belief that someone is reliable, someone is good, someone is honest, effective. Trinidad and Tobago does not have full trust in the police, more so Trinidad and Tobago does not have trust in this PNM Government, and the high levels of trust could lead to healthy interactions, but low levels of trust undermine those constructive relationships that we need to get to the root of crime. Trust in law enforcement allows communities to feel a sense of obligation to obeying the law. Are we getting that from our communities? Are we getting citizens on their own volition choosing to obey the law even if they may not be caught or may not be punished; that is not happening.

Madam President, this Government has indicated that it has a whole-of-government approach, it has taken a whole-of-government approach to fighting crime. It seems to me, Madam President, that what they have done is put one Minister in charge of practically the whole Government and called that their whole-of-government approach. [*Desk thumping*] It is ineffective, it is not working.

I want to put on record before I close, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries chastised the UNC for abstaining from the vote to select the Commissioner of Police. I want to put on record that we voted against. I want to put on record that the UNC did not agree with the process of political selection of a

Commissioner of Police. It is dangerous, and I maintain even today, that it is dangerous for the Commissioner of Police, for the head of law enforcement to be appointed politically because we can see that hold being used for the political purpose of the party in government, and we voted on principle not on person.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan): Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, in accordance with Standing Order 48(4), I beg to move that the debate on Motion 1 be now adjourned. We move on to Motion 2.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam President: Leader of Government Business.

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Just to inform the honourable Senate that on this Motion which is a Motion to annul the Immigration (Amdt.) Regulations, 2019, there was consensus among the three benches that the Opposition will field three speakers, the Independents will field two and the Government will field two.

IMMIGRATION (AMDT.) REGULATIONS, 2019 (ANNULMENT OF)

Sen. Wade Mark: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you Madam President, Madam President, I beg to move the follow Motion standing in my name:

Be it resolved that the Senate annul the Immigration (Amdt.) Regulations, 2019.

Madam President, the Immigration (Amdt.) Regulations, 2019, according to an explanatory memorandum circulated, seeks to amend the Immigration Regulations made under the Immigration Act, Chap. 18:01, to provide for the implementation of a registration framework to offer nationals of Venezuela who have been given legal status, via a ministerial permit to reside in Trinidad and Tobago, the

opportunity to obtain employment within the jurisdiction on a limited and temporary basis.

The amendments to the Immigration Regulations would impact 10(14) to extend the power of the Minister to exempt from the provisions of the regulations as it relates to work permits to a class of persons who hold a valid permit issued under section 10, which I shall return to. It inserts a new regulation 46A after 46, in which there is a new form, 17A and a bilingual version of the application form under subregulation (1).

Now, Madam President, I want to begin my contribution by indicating that policy is very critical when we are dealing with matters of the nature that I have sought to bring to your attention via this Motion, but policy—clarity I should say—is required if we have to have an informed policy.

And, Madam President, we have been in a state of literal confusion in this country as it relates to the tens of thousands of Venezuelan migrants that have visited and have stayed illegally in our country over the last few years. I think it began in 2014, but it intensified between 2016 and the current time.

Madam President, the Government has never been clear as to the status of the thousands of Venezuelans under our Immigration Act; they are referred to as “aliens”. We have never been informed by the Government through their various spokesmen whether they were refugees—that was denied—whether they were asylum seekers, that too was denied, or whether they were economic migrants.

Madam President, I want to refer to a statement delivered on the 2nd of July, 2018, in response to a question that I had posed to then Minister of National Security, the hon. Maj. Gen. Edmund Dillon. And I asked, Madam President, about the increased number of Venezuelans arriving in this country and I sought clarification

on the following:

“...does the Government intend to introduce legislation to establish formal structures to address”—what I call—“refugee and migrant worker issues; and
if so, how soon?”

Madam President, the Minister responded by stating and I quote:

“The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is currently drafting legislation to treat with the issues surrounding refugees and asylum seekers.”

That is what we were told on the 2nd of July, 2018, by the then Minister of National Security. He went on to say:

“This policy is currently being reviewed in order to improve the efficacy of the various Government and non-Government organizational apparatus.”

So this is what we were told, Madam President, in July. But, Madam President, many developments have taken place subsequent to this statement by the Minister. I would say it culminated without we asking the question, it was voluntarily given by the Minister of National Security himself. And I quote what he said, Madam President, on the 24th of June, 2019, in a response to a question I raised just a few hours ago. And I quote, Madam President:

“Also, the continued use of the buzz word by those on the other side, of ‘refugees’, we do not have refugees here, we are dealing with migrants.”

That is what we were told.

So, Madam President, for the first time Trinidad and Tobago was made aware that in—when you compare the statement made by Ret. Maj. Gen. Edmund Dillon, then Minister of National Security, that the Government was formulating a policy on refugees and asylum seekers, and they would have that done within a

reasonable space of time, we got a final policy position from the Minister of National Security saying there are no refugees. You on this side are talking about refugees, but we did not talk about that, that was a statement given to the country by the Minister, the former Minister of National Security.

So, Madam President, I think that is important to put on the record because we are dealing with policy, and arising out of the policy, these definitions are very critical for us as citizens to fully absorb and appreciate.

Madam President, I want to also bring to your attention very early because it will form part of my submission here this evening. Madam President, I am quoting from a *Newsday* article dated Sunday, the 9th of June, 2019, by Clint Chan Tack, and the headline reads, “Ambassador welcomes V’zuelan registration”.

6.10 p.m.

So, Madam President, as we speak in this debate today, Trinidad and Tobago does not know how many illegal Venezuelans are on our shores. The UNHCR has estimated between 40,000 and 50,000. That is what they have recorded and estimated. And, Madam President, we understand that according to the Government they have registered 15,000 and above through a registration process that started on the 31st of May and ended on the 14th of June. But, Trinidad and Tobago is not aware fully of how many illegal migrants are on our shores and in our economic and social spaces. We are not too sure, some people estimate, as I said, 50,000, some people say it could be as high as 100,000.

Madam President, let me just go on to quote what the Ambassador, Carlos Perez, said in an interview, and it is reproduced in the *Newsday* of Sunday the 9th of June, 2019, and I quote:

“It’s a very good initiative from the Government of”—Trinidad and

Tobago.—“He said the process will give Venezuelans here an opportunity to regularise their status, get an opportunity to work for a year in TT and be protected by this country’s laws.

Perez said”—he goes on, the article that is—“Venezuelans who are legally registered through this process, will have another opportunity to apply...”

I want you to listen very carefully. This is the Ambassador of Venezuela speaking. He cannot be speaking out of turn. He knows something that we do not know. He says:

“Perez said Venezuelans who are legally registered through this process, will have another opportunity to apply for residency or citizenship in Trinidad and Tobago or get a legal work permit.”

He goes on to say:

““At the end of the day, when you migrate it’s a personal decision.””

Madam President, this Government, as I said, has been in office for nearly four years. The Venezuelan crisis has been here and it has raged on for the period that the Government has been in office, but as I said it intensified between 2016 into the period that we are currently experiencing, that is the present time.

Madam President, the question here is this, they are not asylum seekers. There is a definition for asylum seekers under international law; an asylum seeker is a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violation in another country, but who has not yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. That is what you call an asylum seeker.

Under international law a refugee is a person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violation and persecution, and their

safety and life were so great in terms of risk that they felt that they had no choice but to leave and seek safety outside their country. That is a refugee. What is a migrant worker? According to Amnesty International, migrants to be people staying outside their country of origin who are not asylum seekers or refugees. Some migrants leave their country because they want to work, study or join family. So a migrant worker is a person who has left its country voluntarily seeking opportunities to improve his or her family personal life.

So, Madam President, now that we have been told by the Minister of National Security, who under the Immigration Act, which these regulations are being amended, is responsible for citizenship and also responsible for granting permits, what is called ministerial permits, is the person who told us some 24 hours ago that we are only dealing with migrant, economic migrant. Those are people who have come here voluntarily. No one has forced them to come here, so we have to bear that in mind, because we are talking about policy in this particular context.

So, the question that we need to pay attention to is this, the Minister of National Security announced in his programme, which as you know, Madam President, the registration took place between May the 31st and June the 14th. We are told from the Government, by the Government, that some 15,000 persons were registered, and they have now been given a card so that they can be employed at will in Trinidad and Tobago, and they have been given what is called this card. I could only assume, Madam President, under the Act, which I will quote shortly, is a ministerial permit that will permit them to work legally in this country. The question here, Madam President, is that persons who have come into our country voluntarily and illegally have now been given a ministerial permit, and they have

now become legal visitors or aliens, or visitors, or as we call them, migrants. They are legal, so they can now seek, as I said, employment

The hon. Minister, Madam President, in the regulation introduced a new form, which I will deal with in a short here. We are made to understand, and the Minister has to clear the air, that this card or permit that he has granted “to 15,000” Venezuelans will last for one year. One year. I want to ask the Minister, when he is responding to this Motion, whether the form that is attached to this [*Senator holds up document*] or the Immigration (Amdt.) Regulations, that is Form 17A, I would like the Minister to tell Trinidad and Tobago, he always likes to talk about he is speaking to Trinidad and Tobago and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Well tonight, I am speaking to the people of Trinidad and Tobago as well, and I want the hon. Minister in responding to indicate whether Form 17A that we have in this document, whether that was the same document, the same form that was given to the 15,000 Venezuelans to fill out? I want answers. Or I want to know if this is a different form that we are dealing with this evening? I need clarification. I hope he would provide that.

Madam President, the question that we have to ask here, the Minister under the law, and we are talking, Madam President, when we look at the regulations before us we are seeing where under section 10 of the Immigration Act, something called “Entry under Permit”, and it tells you, Madam President, that the Minister has the power to grant a permit, not exceeding 12 months, to an individual in accordance with this section of the Act, and it tells you what, for instance, the permit, rather, that would be issued by the Minister to the following persons and those persons are outlined in this piece of legislation that is before us.

Now, the question here, Madam President, is that the operations and effect

of this ministerial permit are found in this section as I have identified. Madam President, we ask the question, why a ministerial permit to illegal persons who have violated the laws of Trinidad and Tobago? Why has this Government issued a legal permit to illegal entrants into our land? We need to have clarification from the Minister as to why the hon. Minister chose to do that. Why this permit? This permit in an environment of high unemployment among the citizens of this country is going to allow persons, as I said, to legally work, and there are three instances under the law that aliens can be allowed to work in this country: An employer can apply for you whilst you are out of the country; an alien who is under regulation 10(1)(c) entering this country can work for 30 days and get out; or you can get a true ministerial permit under section 10. What this ministerial permit is doing is sanitizing an alien's record if they were illegal based upon illegal entry or overstaying their allotted time. So you have people coming into the country, overstaying their allotted time and Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through the Minister of National Security, is legalizing an illegality via a work permit.

What does this mean, Madam President? What does this mean? It means that subsequent to being the recipient of a ministerial permit, a Venezuelan national would become a regular legal entity or person in Trinidad and Tobago. With that legal permit, that Venezuelan can compete with a national for employment at any place of employment in this country. I would like to ask, Madam President, what benefits, what are the benefits the Government intends to derive from this particular exercise? Madam President, if you go to the Immigration Act, and I ask my colleagues who may be in possession of it, to go to the Immigration Act and the Immigration Act outlines under 5(1) the following persons not being citizens. Madam President, I want you to follow very carefully,

because this is a very serious, dangerous and disturbing development that we are experiencing in this country. Madam President, it says:

“The following persons not being citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are residents of Trinidad and Tobago.”

And they outline the persons who can become—who are not citizens, Madam President, but can become resident. (f) of 5(1) states:

“such other persons on whom the Minister may confer the status of a resident.”

The Minister has power under section 5(1)(f) of the Immigration Act to infer on someone—or to confer, rather—on someone the status of a resident. He has that power. And, Madam President, the Minister has that power. When you go to section 5(2) and you go to subsection (3) it says:

“For the purposes of subsection (1)(f)”—that is where—“the Minister...confer the status of a resident on...”

—an alien, in this instance a Venezuelan, 15,000 of them, who have now been given a ministerial permit to work in this country, the Minister can confer status of a resident, and for the purpose or purposes—that is 5(3)(1)—(3) rather:

“For the purposes of subsection (1)(f) the Minister may, in his discretion, confer the status of a resident on any person he considers fit.”

Madam President, look at the kind of wide powers a Minister of National Security has—15,000 Venezuelans, and more might be here illegally, and they might become legal later on, the Minister has the power under the Act, in his own discretion, to confer the status of a resident on any person he considers fit. So the Minister, Madam President, under the instructions possibly of the Cabinet, might decide that the 15,000 persons and more, who have registered and have been given

a ministerial permit, within 12 months can be given resident status in this country. Madam President, you know resident status is the first major critical entry point before they move into the second entry point, naturalization of a citizen, naturalization of a resident to become a citizen, and if he becomes a naturalized resident and he becomes a citizen through that process, you have a right to vote in a general election in Trinidad and Tobago under the citizenship Act of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam President, this is very serious business, and court clothes are being prepared. This Government will not be allowed to exploit the Immigration Act, the ROPA, which is the Representation of the People Act, [*Desk thumping*] they will not be allowed to exploit the citizenship of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Act, in order to get people into Trinidad and Tobago through the back door and allow, for instance, aliens to determine the future of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. I want to serve notice on the Government, if that is your intention, withdraw. Withdraw.

Sen. Baptiste-Primus: Crick crack.

Sen. W. Mark: Withdraw. Withdraw.

Sen. Baptiste-Primus: Crick crack.

Sen. W. Mark: Well you could say crick crack, because Ancel Roget is waiting on you. Licks like peas, the Minister of silence. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Mark, no. Sen. Mark, please.

Sen. W. Mark: Tell her not to disturb me.

Madam President: Minister! Sen. Mark, do not allow yourself to be disturbed. It is your Motion. Okay!

Sen. W. Mark: Yes. [*Laughter*] But I will deal with her in the—

Madam President: Sen. Mark, just deal with speaking to me.

Sen. W. Mark: “Yeah, yeah, I will deal with yuh.”

Madam President: Thank you.

Sen. W. Mark: So, thank you very much. Yes, Madam President. I would talk to Ancel Roget about your behaviour. So, Madam President, this is a very important matter that we are dealing with here. They might want to laugh about it, but we know what the Government is about. We know what went on in 2015 general election in this country. We know what happened here, and it will not happen again.

Sen. Baptiste-Primus: Crack crack.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, can I be allowed to speak without any disturbances coming from crick crack? [*Laughter*]

So, Madam President, I go on. So, Madam President, the question here, so what benefit, I ask, the Government would be deriving by granting resident status or conferring the status of resident on these aliens in our country? Because, Madam President, I have outlined to you in the legislation the power of discretion of the Minister to grant status of resident to a person who has been given ministerial permit and that person is living in the country for 12 consecutive months.

Madam President, may I remind you and the people who are listening in Trinidad and Tobago, the Government conveniently chose to begin a registration process in June of this year. Venezuelans have been invading the spaces of our country for the last three years, between '16 and the current time. But the Government knows a general election is in September earliest, December latest, of 2020, and you have a registration process that starts in the month of May, May 31st, and it ended on the

14th of June. So by May 31st next year it would be 12 months. Twelve months in 2019. Is the Minister going after May 31, 2020 to issue resident certificates, or to grant resident status to all of these citizens, or all of these aliens I should say, or Venezuelans? We need answers. We need answers.

Madam President, this is no jokey arrangement. This is serious business. I have something called the Citizenship of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Act. I have studied this matter, and, Madam President, when I look at the citizenship Act, I want you to join me on section 12, because it is linked to the Immigration Act and the power of the Minister to grant resident status to aliens in our country. Madam President, here what 12(1) of this Act says, and you know who has the power? The Minister of National Security. You know who is responsible for citizenship under the laws of Trinidad and Tobago? The Minister of National Security. So, the Minister is taking decisions without Parliament and without the people. Hear what it says, and I quote:

“The Minister may grant a certificate of naturalisation...”

Madam President, listen to this very carefully. This is 12(1) of the citizenship Act.

“The Minister may grant a certificate of naturalisation to any alien of full age and capacity who makes the prescribed application therefor and satisfies the Minister—”

Madam President, is this the application? Is this the application Form 17A that we are called upon to approve? Once the alien fills out this form—or maybe is it a new form? We do not know. They have an application. Let the Minister tell this country what application form they will have to fill out. And, Madam President, it says:

“...and satisfies the Minister—

(a) that he has the qualifications specified in...7(1)(a) and (b);”

Let us go to 7(1)(a) and (b) of the law and see what it says. 7(1) says, Madam President:

“Subject to this section, the Minister may cause any person of full age and capacity to whom this section applies to be registered as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago if that person makes the prescribed application for registration to the Minister and satisfies the Minister—

(a) that he is of good character;

(b) that he has an adequate knowledge of the English language and of the duties of a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago;”

That is all that has to be done by the resident who gets that status after 12 months, and now goes to what?—naturalisation to become a citizen and to be able to vote in a local and general election in Trinidad and Tobago. That is all that is required. So let me go back, Madam President, to section 12(1). It says, Madam President, 12(1)(b)—satisfies the Minister—and it says in (b):

“that he has resided in Trinidad and Tobago throughout the period of twelve months immediately preceding the date of his application;”

Madam President, you understand what is happening here? The Government is using the laws of Trinidad and Tobago to make aliens who are not citizens of this Republic, citizens of this Republic through naturalisation, to allow them to vote in the next local government election and the next general election in this country.

[*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Mark. [*Crosstalk*] Members, please! You are imputing improper motive.

Sen. Baptiste-Primus: Yes.

Madam President: May I speak, please?

Sen. Baptiste-Primus: Sorry, Madam President.

Madam President: You are imputing improper motives there, Sen. Mark. Please withdraw that and restate whatever you have to say.

Sen. W. Mark: All right, Madam President, I withdraw it and I am saying that the Government, any government—let me withdraw it, I understand the point you are making. But I am going on a platform and I will expose them. [*Desk thumping*] Every one of them I would expose. You think we are allowing the PNM to do anything to undermine the integrity of a fair and free election in this country?

Madam President: Sen. Mark, but you—

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, I withdraw that, and let me go on.

Madam President: Yes. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. W. Mark: Listen, this lady and so on—

Madam President: No, no, no. Sen. Mark, please take your seat.

Sen. W. Mark: Well, control that lady.

Madam President: Please take your seat!

Sen. W. Mark: Yeah, well control that lady.

Madam President: Please take your seat! Members, please, allow Sen. Mark to make his contribution. Okay! No interruptions, please! Sen. Mark, continue.

Sen. W. Mark: Thank you. You know it is a love/hate relationship. Madam President, may I continue? Madam President, what I am saying is that any government can use these provisions to have people registered and make them naturalized as citizens and give them the right to vote in a general election in this country, and I am saying this is dangerous, it is disturbing, and it is something that we have to halt and put a stop to [*Desk thumping*] if that is the intention of any

government, Madam President, without imputing improper motives. Okay? Any government. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Ameen: It fall in your garden?

Sen. Gopee-Scoon: You are so loud.

Sen. W. Mark: Yes, I am loud because this is a very serious matter. Very serious matter.

6.40 p.m.

Madam President, so we are very concerned about what the Government is trying to engage in. And we have done our own investigations and we have come to the conclusion that many citizens in this country who are non-commonwealth and who are supposed to be residing there for five years under ROPA, ROPA means the Representation of the People Act, we are gathering information to take to the Elections and Boundaries Commission that in the last general election, Madam President, we have evidence emerging that persons who were not supposed to vote in the last general election under ROPA were given the opportunity to vote in the last general election. [*Crosstalk*] And we want to know what is happening and that is why, Madam President, the Elections and Boundaries Commission is so important in this matter. We want to know if there is a link between the immigration database of the Ministry of National Security and the database of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, if there is a link.

Madam President: Sen. Mark, you have five more minutes.

Sen. W. Mark: We want to know if there is a link between those two bodies, because it is a very, very serious development.

Madam President, the late President Chavez who has now gone to the great beyond, he issued a decree on the 3rd of February of 2004 and the decree read, it

was a regulation for the regularization and naturalization of foreigners found in the national territory of Venezuela. And, Madam President, would you believe that what happened in 2004 and beyond is that the particular agency in Venezuela that was responsible for effecting that decree was able to quickly grant citizenship to over 200,000 foreign nationals, primarily from Colombia and they became naturalized. Madam President, what that did, it allowed those 200,000 foreign nationals and more to vote in an election in a national referendum on the Presidency of the former Hugo Chavez during the summer of 2004.

So I want to know if this Government is taking lessons out of Venezuela. Is this an experience that they have now translated? Madam President, any government, not this one, it could be any one government, whether this exercise that has happened across the oceans is now being mimicked by any government in this country.

So, Madam President, we are saying simply, we have brought this matter to annul the Motion. We say when we look at this particular Motion, we see a lot of inconsistencies in this particular matter. Madam President, people can fill out a form and mislead this Government, whether it is medical history, whether it is criminal record as outlined in this and therefore, there is no way that Trinidad and Tobago could support such a move by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam President, why would the Minister, in closing, want to introduce an amendment to regulation 10(14) of these regulations. Whereby there is a Form 36, if you fill it out under this regulation you can stay in Trinidad and Tobago but you cannot work. What this Government has done is to amend regulation 10(14) and include the following:

“with or without conditions—

(b) a class of persons who hold a valid permit issued under section

10 of the Act.”

So the Minister issues a valid permit under section 10 of the Act and that person or those persons now have the right to work and you know what this has done, Madam President? This is what I am telling you, we have our court clothes, getting all firmed up and if they take the law out of their minds, they will face the music.

Madam President, may I tell you in the few seconds I have, in section 8 of this Act there is a provision that talks about prohibited classes. There is something called “prohibited classes”, and when we look at this section we are seeing where the Government is in breach of the law. They are granting work permits to individuals which is contrary to section 8 of the law. But they alone know what is their objective and what is their purpose. Our only purpose in raising and seeking to have this annulled this evening, is to ensure that the Government of this country does not undermine the holding of free and fair elections. And, Madam President, most importantly, we do not want aliens and strangers. In Australia they cannot vote, in Canada they cannot vote and therefore in Trinidad and Tobago they cannot and will not be permitted to vote. I beg to move, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Someone needs to second the Motion.

Sen. Ameen: Madam President, I wish to second the Motion by Sen. Mark and reserve my time to speak later in the debate.

Question proposed.

The Minister of National Security, Minister of Communications, Acting Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much,

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Madam President. Madam President, as a citizen it was quite disappointing to have the Opposition pursuing this Motion after a very successful registration process. And I respectfully submit, Madam President, through you that this is just a continuation of the xenophobia by the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Obika: Madam Speaker, 46(6) and 46(4). I rise on Standing Order 46(6) and 46(4). You are a visitor here, sit down.

Hon. Senator: Excuse me?

Madam President: Sen. Obika, I have repeatedly told you—let me state it again. You have given us a classic example of how not to invoke a Standing Order. I will ask you to please pay some attention to the Standing Orders. Okay? Minister of National Security.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ameen: I rise on Standing Order 46(6).

Madam President: Overruled. Continue, Minister of National Security.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. Madam President, the population has been looking on and the population has already made their decision. This morning as I went to exercise I was stopped by members of the population and they asked me whether I had seen some meeting taking place last night with very similar submissions to that which we have heard this evening. And what the member, the citizen said, [*Crosstalk*] is that it is very disappointing to see people who want to lead—Jennifer—who want to see—it was very disappointing to see a person who want to lead the country making the type of allegations we have just heard fall from the lips of Sen. Mark, and these are just a repeat of the allegations from the Leader of the Opposition last night. So the population has already made their decision and the population endorses and they are actually the ones who told me

what is taking place with xenophobia.

Madam President, this legislation was made as part of the Government's migrant registration framework offering nationals of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela a registration in Trinidad and Tobago. The allegations being made about these regulations are wholly false, inaccurate and once again a failed attempt to misinform the public of Trinidad and Tobago. Because you see, Madam President, the facts are stubborn things and the Government, through me at a Post Cabinet conference on the 18th of April, 2019, announced to the world what this migrant registration framework would be and is all about, including the policies behind it. So it is very easy and very simple to debunk all that has been said previously by just referring to the policy that has already, since 11 weeks ago, on the 11th of April, been told to the world at large. And I, through you, Madam President, will take this opportunity now to remind the population, on the 11th of April we announced that there would be a temporary and limited migrant registration framework and that it would take place during a two-week period to commence on the 31st of May, 2019, and it would end on the 14th of June, 2019.

And I pause to take the opportunity to thank all of the immigration workers, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the defence force, fire services, the health workers, the Children's Authority and all of the volunteers, including the interpreters who made this two-week process a success as I would soon describe. [*Desk thumping*] On the 18th of April, 11 weeks ago I also announced that at the registration process Venezuelan nationals will be required to be fingerprinted, have their photographs taken and provide evidence that they are Venezuelans by providing a local address; they would also provide a local address where they are staying and fill out forms. Again, that process proved invaluable to national

security. Not from the point of view of those on the other side are suggesting, but in terms of protecting our citizens because we gathered invaluable intelligence during that process. Invaluable intelligence as to how people came in illegally, who it was that brought them in illegally, et cetera. And that intelligence is now going to form the basis of operations that the country will see unfolding in the coming weeks.

I also announced that the only free health care that would be permitted to registered Venezuelans would be emergency medical services, primary health care and public health. I also stated at that time exactly what was captured in that. We also announced, and this, Madam President, is probably the most important part, and in this singular sentence, I tell the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, it completely debunks this boogeyman, this ghost, the continued xenophobia that they are trying to stir up and linking it to—

Sen. Obika: Standing Order 46(4), Madam President, it is offensive and insulting to link xenophobia to the UNC.

Madam President: Minister, continue.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*] You see, Madam President, what the attempt that is being tried to, be promoted, starting—when we announced this process you would recall, the population would recall the first thing the Leader of the Opposition screamed is, the EBC is going to register them to vote, the EBC is part of the registration process. As the nation has seen, completely false. The EBC came out straightaway and say, we do not know what you are talking about. And the EBC was telling the truth, Madam President, because they had nothing to do with it. It was handled by immigration and the Ministry of National Security. But this singular sentence that I am about to remind

the population about, completely debunks—so let them go to court, they can go where they want, they are accustomed to losing in court, is this, the MRF and the period permitted to Venezuelans to be here under this policy, will not form part of any calculation of the time required to apply for residency or citizenship.

So we said it at the outset, because unlike others who crave power and would utilize it, and I will show, I will show statistically, during the course of my contribution, Madam Speaker, why it is, this false allegation is being made by the Opposition. And I will prove to the country why the Opposition is so obsessed about it, because it is something that they were doing and I have it here and I will expose them here tonight. So to the population and anyone who is listening, I remind you, that the Government at the outset, on the 18th of April, and it was repeated throughout and I am repeating it here again tonight, the registration process and the period granted to any Venezuelan under this registration process will not form part of the calculation of any time for residency or citizenship. They start from zero. So the attempt to mislead the population has once again failed and it is not something that is made up, because it is something that was announced as the policy at the outset. We went on to say, another debunk comes here, once registered, they will be considered to have been granted the equivalent of a work permit exemption, not a ministerial permit, but a work permit exemption, clearly set out in the law, developed by the technocrats and the bureaucrats, because that is who I sat down with to draft the policy that was accepted by Cabinet. This is the Cabinet approved policy for a period of one year.

So again, all of the noise, the fanfare, the hot air, about why one year and trying to link one year, and you know what is the disturbing part, respectfully, Madam President, that Senior Counsel, all of us who grew up at the Bar at a different time

and had respect for Senior Counsel and would look up to Senior Counsel are now so disappointed, because this argument has been led by Senior Counsel, albeit self-appointed, but still Senior Counsel, an attempt to mislead the population and I will show that the Leader of the Opposition could not have even read the law before making these ridiculous submissions that are continued here today in this august Senate by Sen. Mark, the most blatant of attempts to mislead the population.

We went on to say that the initial work permit exemption will be valid for a period of six months. So you are not even entitled to it for a whole year, come back after six months and we will review it, we will ask you the questions. It reminds me of another point, him saying that the cards have been given out. Not a single card has been given out as yet, because a due diligence process is taking place. Not a single card has been given out, but I could tell you what, a whole set “ah” them does go to UNC forum, a whole set “ah” them does end up in bus loads there.

Hon. Senator: That is not true.

Hon. S. Young: Right. So the initial work permit exemption will be valid for a period of six months. However, prior to the expiration of permitted entry, migrants will be required to report to the designated Immigration Divisions Office and provide evidence of their employment, if so employed, as well as places of abode and subsequently they may be granted a further six months. We went on to say on the 11th of April, 11 weeks ago, that the registration process will include the registrant signing a statutory declaration that all of the information provided is true and accurate and post-registration, due diligence will be carried of the information provided and should it be found that any of the information provided was false, Madam President, the work permit exemption can and will be revoked and the migrant deported. So again, at the outset we told the population exactly how this

process would work and thankfully the process worked.

Another fictitious, imaginative piece of misinformation and I was amazed to hear it climb tonight, it is a fact that over two years ago the UNHCR declared, and one wonders how they came with the number 40,000 Venezuelans in Trinidad and Tobago, two years ago before the crisis really took place in Venezuela.

In January of this year, Madam President, is when things hit a real crisis in Venezuela, when suddenly there was a declaration of a second President in Venezuela and a whole host of sanctions being put on Venezuela. And after January of this year is when the real migrant flows began out of Venezuela. Logic, we have just completed a two-week registration process where we invited all legally landed and illegally landed migrants from Venezuela to register. At the end of that process, on Friday the 14th of June the streets outside the Oval were a ghost town by five o'clock. If there was still thousands to be registered they would have been there forcing their way through the gate, it did not happen. In Tobago, unfortunately, there was a hiccup from a humanitarian point of view, they moved without permission, some of those who were lining up on the last day of registration to a building out of the sun, et cetera, so they were not there at five o'clock. Immediately upon getting that information I took the decision after consultation with the chairman of the National Security Council to ring fence them, ensure who had not been registered would be registered and they were registered. Outside San Fernando at five o'clock, same thing happened. And let me tell you what happened.

On the Monday morning, suddenly people arrived saying we were not registered on Friday. And as I asked the heads of security this week, I said, that took place on Monday—was that mischief?—because on Tuesday nobody was there. If persons

really were not registered would they not have still been queuing up, still outside all of the immigration centres begging to be registered. So respectfully, to the world, to the whole world, I say as the person in charge of this process that it was 16,523 Venezuelans registered in that two-week process. Not 40,000, not the 100,000 that that Senator, Sen. Mark, just declared to the world. This is how they operate, loose, loose talk. The fact is that after a two-week registration process that went remarkably well, the people of Trinidad and Tobago know as a fact now we have 16,523 registered Venezuelans in Trinidad and Tobago. Does that mean that there are not some who are here illegally? I am sure that they are. We will apply the law to them. But there is no way, Madam President, I respectfully submit, that there can be 5,000, 10,000, 20,000 of them outside there who had the opportunity to register and they did not participate. Completely false and misleading.

Let us get now to the law, Madam President, because a lot of noise has been made about this attempt by the Government, which I have just proved to the nation is completely false. Because our policy is your registration does not get you one step, one minute, one hour closer to the calculation of time to become a citizen or a resident of Trinidad and Tobago. Let us turn to who is eligible to vote in Trinidad and Tobago. A citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. I have just said, this process does not count towards citizenship. But you have to be a citizen over 18 years and reside in an electoral district for at least two months. They are not going to be citizens so they do not qualify under that. A Commonwealth citizen, as far as we are aware it may be something different at another time for another administration. Venezuela is not part of the Commonwealth. So they do not qualify there either. A non-commonwealth citizen, 18 years or older who has resided legally in Trinidad and Tobago for a period of at least five years. So for a period of five

years, so to be eligible to vote, so once again Senior Counsel, Leader of the Senate Bench come to mislead the population of Trinidad and Tobago as to about eligibility to vote.

Madam President: Minister, I will ask you to rephrase what you just said, re: the presentation of Sen. Mark.

Hon. S. Young: Madam President, I sat here and I listened very carefully—

Madam President: Yes, just—

Hon. S. Young: I am rephrasing. I sat here and listened very carefully and there is no doubt whatsoever that the submission being made by Sen. Mark is that the Government could have embarked upon this process of registering Venezuelans for the purpose of them then being declared citizens or residents to vote. He said, in a local election this year and in a general election next year. I have just stated what the law of Trinidad and Tobago is and this administration abides by the law. I cannot speak for them. This administration abides by the law and the law is clear, to be eligible to vote you have to be a non-commonwealth citizen who has resided legally in Trinidad and Tobago for a period of at least five years. So we have said that you cannot become a citizen, you cannot become a resident and they do not qualify under this because they would not be here for five years.

So I say without any fear of contradiction that this registration process has absolutely nothing to do with the registration of any Venezuelan to vote in any election in Trinidad and Tobago as being submitted by those on the other side. It goes on to say, applicable legislation under the Representation of the People Act, he called it ROPA, Representation of the People Act, Chap. 2:01:

“12. (1) Subject to this Act, a person is qualified to be an elector for an electoral district at a Parliamentary election, a Municipal

Council election or the Tobago House of Assembly election...”

If you are an elector for an electoral district at the municipal corporation election, if you are a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. I have just stated categorically why none of these 16,523 registered Venezuelans, many of whom are under the age of 18. Because despite what was being suggested over the weekend by a certain newspaper, we registered everyone, baby to adult. We did not leave out anyone who turned up at a registration centre. None of them will be citizens under this administration. And as we have said clearly in our policy, the Cabinet decision that is recorded in black and white, none of the period of a year takes them any step further to qualifying under our laws of Trinidad and Tobago towards citizenship or towards residency.

So it is a complete fallacy. It is a complete naked, blatant attempt to mislead the population of Trinidad and Tobago, fearmongering at the highest possible level, being led by none other than Senior Counsel who obviously did not read the law. And worse yet if Senior Counsel read the law and set out to mislead the population and you know what upset me, Minister Kazim Hosein is not here, fortunately maybe. I was looking at my television and saw this announcement and pronouncement come from the pulpit at a mosque, going amongst people to celebrate at a mosque and this is what fell from the lips of Senior Counsel, that this process is being done by the PNM for elections. Completely false and misleading, Madam President. Completely false and misleading.

Now I will explain to the population now, Madam President, if you would permit the opportunity why it is in their DNA, and what is in their DNA and why it is that they thought this could happen and I am telling the population that thank God this registration process took place under a PNM administration and we took the

protection to protect the laws of Trinidad and Tobago that we did. Because you see one thing that Sen. Mark was correct about, Madam President, is when he quoted the law as to who has power, who has power under the Immigration Act to declare and to grant citizenship and residency, is the Minister of National Security. And the behaviour as though this is something new, something unique, something that has not been applied in Trinidad and Tobago before, again, a complete attempt to mislead the population of Trinidad and Tobago.

I can tell you, as the Minister of National Security at the time charged with the responsibility of bringing the policy to Cabinet, after having careful discussions with the Chairman of National Security Council and the Cabinet helping to formulate the policy that I have just referred to, to ensure that exactly what has been suggested cannot happen under us. It may have happened under them. And let me tell the population some statistics now.

The Minister of National Security under the former administration in 2010 granted 324 citizenships, 465 permanent residencies, totalling 807, they now reach. It start at 807. In 2011, the administration, the Minister of National Security, under the former administration, granted 268 citizenships, 556 permanent residencies. They went up to 824 from 807. In 2012 the former administration's Minister of National—and Madam President, I ask for your forgiveness in not being able to name them, because they were a lot, they were switching every week. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Mark: You do not want to name Gary. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. S. Young: 2012—oh, you will see, you will when it comes to Gary he took it down. [*Crosstalk*] In 2012 number of persons granted citizenship, 313; [*Crosstalk*] the number granted permanent residency—the immaturity in this Senate is unreal, you know. In 2012 the number of persons granted permanent

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residency, I want the population of Trinidad and Tobago to take note what happened under the former administration. In 2012, 874 permanent residents. So permanent residents jump higher, higher in one year than the total of residencies and citizenships in the two years, 1,187—

Hon. Senator: “Oooh.” Oh my goodness.

Hon. S. Young: In 2013, 194 citizenships granted, 852 permanent residencies, 1,046 for that year. In 2014, it starts to come down, you want to talk about the Commissioner of Police, then- Minister of National Security; 2014, 132 citizenships, 658 permanent residencies, 790, the lowest, the lowest figure under the former administration.

7.10 p.m.

So they went from 807 to 824 to 1,187; 1,046 the next year, to 790; 2015: 34 citizenships granted; 170 permanent residencies, down to 204. So I want the population of Trinidad and Tobago to know what happened. [*Crosstalk*] I am going to continue. It went from 807 to 824 to 1,187 to 1,046 to 790 to 204. Enter our administration for a full year: 2016: 15 citizenships granted—15—down from 324 under them in one year, and 93 permanent residencies, for a total of 108 for a year compared to 1,187. [*Crosstalk*] That is why they are so worried, because they know what they were going to do.

Madam President: Members, please, on both sides, can I please have some silence as I listen to the Minister of National Security? Continue, Minister.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, in the year 2017, again, under this administration, 16 citizenships granted; 79 permanent residencies. We dropped from 108 to 95. And then in 20—that is 2017. So, Madam President, those are the facts of what happened under the normal application of the

law and that is why those on the other side came up with this ridiculous submission that the Venezuelan registration process had something to do with elections in Trinidad and Tobago. And I respectfully submit, it is because that is something that they were doing. [*Desk thumping*] That is something that they were doing.

Let me just deal now—Madam President, may I ask how much more time I have?

Madam President: You finish at 7.26.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, let me now deal with—because I heard it again, fall from the Leader of the Opposition’s lips, Senior Counsel’s lips—as well as those on the other side, that the Venezuelan Ambassador, who is a new ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, has somehow made the law for Trinidad and Tobago; has somehow made a declaration, and it just came from Sen. Mark. He knows something that we do not know. Well, he knows something that the Government does not know as well, because the Government’s policy, as I have very carefully quoted here tonight for the population, states in the clearest possible terms that this migrant registration process, and any period granted to any Venezuelan under it, will not form part of calculation of any time towards residency or citizenship.

So the suggestion being made that the Venezuelan Ambassador said: “Give Venezuelans another opportunity to apply for residency, citizenship or a work permit”—with the greatest of respect to the diplomat—is completely wrong. There is no truth to it whatsoever, because this process, I repeat once again, takes no Venezuelan any closer to the granting of citizenship or residency under this administration.

I also remind the population that at the outset, when there was this cry of the EBC being involved, or this going towards registration for voting, the Elections and

Boundaries Commission, from our perspective, with the greatest of respect, is one of the working independent bodies in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And as a citizen, I will not stand here and watch another independent body be brutally attacked by the Opposition for their own self-serving purposes. The Elections and Boundaries Commission had nothing to do with the registration process. They are not being approached by the Government for anything to do with this registration process, whatsoever.

The suggestion, again, by Sen. Mark, and him asking the question: “What is the link between the immigration and EBC?” None. No link. Has nothing to do with it, whatsoever. I know their bubble must have burst, Madam President. I know they must be deflated to know that it cannot happen, and it will not happen under this administration. Their obnoxious behaviour is part and parcel of it. The way that they behave, the way that they continue to attempt to mislead not only the population, but to use this Senate, to use this sacred place called Parliament, to launch their scathing attacks on the truth and to attack a process that has gone remarkably well.

So, Madam President, there is not much left to say because it has all been dealt with. I want to end by just speaking to the citizens briefly, and thanking them for their patience, and thanking them for their support in what the Government has done, but reminding them that the Prime Minister has stated, I have stated and every other government spokesperson on this process has stated, the people of Trinidad and Tobago come first. The people of Trinidad and Tobago, under this administration, are our priority.

We have a duty as human beings to be humanitarians to those in need. It is closed off now. We did not go a day beyond the 14th of June. We have closed off the

registration process. We are conducting the due diligence. The registration cards shall be distributed shortly. The law is going to be applied. Persons are going to be deported. Persons who engage in illegality, whether you are registered or not, it is not going to help you. Any person committing a criminal act from a foreign country, be it Venezuela or any other country, if you are detained and charged, as the Minister of National Security, I will deport you. And I have signed a number of deportation orders and will continue to do so, because at the end of the day our priority, as a Government, is to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

And I thank all those who participated in the registration process, all of those who made it a success, and I tell the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, do not fall into the trap of xenophobia. Do not fall into the trap being stirred and the fearmongering being stirred. Continue to do what is right—

Sen. Obika: I rise on Standing Order 46(4) and 46(6).

Hon. Senator: Sit down—

Madam President: Continue, Minister of National Security.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. So, Madam Speaker, the behaviour continues. The population looks on and sees, because I did not make any allegation about anyone. I told the citizens not to engage in xenophobia, and I am sure that every right-thinking citizen and every civic-minded citizen, and every citizen who is a humanitarian, whilst protecting themselves, as they have a right to do—and the Government will do what they can to protect them—will not participate in the fearmongering and the xenophobia that is taking place in a very small minority.

So, Madam President, I thank you for the opportunity to have participated in this debate. I am certain it has fallen completely flat now, because anything said contrary to what has been put forward, I can tell the population, would be a

complete lie and would be a complete falsehood. With those few words, Madam President, thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Minister, your last sentence, can you just withdraw and rephrase?

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, as I was saying—

Sen. Mark: Withdraw.

Hon. S. Young:—I withdraw the word “lie” and as I am about to say to correct it, and to leave on the *Hansard* anything that is said—[*Crosstalk*]

Madam President: Members, please—

Hon. S. Young: You are immature.

Madam President: I have had enough of having to warn Members about being quiet. The next time I have to, I am going to ask the Members to leave the Chamber. Minister, please complete your contribution.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much. So, Madam President, anything that is said contrary to the Government’s policy that I believe has so been clearly articulated here this evening, will not be the truth and it will be a naked attempt to continue a failed attempt to misinform the population of Trinidad and Tobago. And I end by saying that it is 16,523 Venezuelans registered, not 40,000, not 80,000, not 100,000 and not the numbers that continue to go up—16,523. Thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Vieira.

Sen. Anthony Vieira: Thank you, Madam President. This is a difficult situation and a difficult debate not just because I only got wind of it a few hours ago. Now, I have often been accused as a lawyer of fixating on narrow technicalities and losing

sight of the broader picture and the humanitarian concerns, so I am going to take a different tact tonight. Let me start by making a couple quotations:

“The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them but to be indifferent to them. That’s the essence of inhumanity.”

—George Bernard Shaw.

And then Mother Teresa said:

“The less we have, the more we give.

Seems absurd, but it’s the logic of love.”

This Motion is that the Senate annul the immigration regulations. Sen. Mark spoke about policy and he wondered about the benefits. The Immigration Act and work permit exemptions have been around for a long time and it is, without question, that the Minister of National Security has wide powers, so I do not think it can be seriously disputed that these regulations are *intra vires*. I do not plan, therefore, to debate the legality of the regulations, but the underlying policy and our responsibilities as a nation. And I will try, in the course of my contribution, to treat with Sen. Mark’s concerns about Venezuelans invading our economic spaces and taking jobs, and Venezuelans voting in the forthcoming elections.

Now, for many Trinidadians, Venezuela is a different universe. Because of our colonial past, we tend to be more familiar with the old British West Indies: Jamaica, Barbados, St. Lucia, Grenada. Venezuela—even though we are closer to Venezuela than to Tobago, because I think we are like sevenmiles from Venezuela and 26 miles from Tobago, and even though we speak a different language—we tend not to know. Yet, we have had a very long relationship with Venezuela. They have been a trading partner. We have joint ventures with them in energy. We share the same music in parang, and food.

I remember in the '80s going to Venezuela often—Caracas. It was a shopping destination. People went to Margarita. They went there for medical care. Angostura Bitters that we take such great pride in, originated in Venezuela. And 200 years ago, in the Venezuelan War of Independence, Trinidadians known as the Immortal 45 played a pivotal role. They actually tipped the balance of power. So we have close connections with Venezuela, even though they may not always be recognized or celebrated.

Now, I do not want to quibble with words. Refugee is a person who has been forced to leave his country in order to escape war, persecution, natural disaster. Asylum seeker is a person who flees his home country, enters another country and applies for asylum, that is, the right to protection in another country. An asylum seeker is a type of migrant and may be a refugee or a displaced person. Whether they leave voluntarily—and voluntarily means: out of your own free will—the fact is, 16,000 Venezuelans have migrated to Aruba; 263,000 have migrated to Ecuador; 168,000 have migrated to Brazil; 288,000 have migrated to Chile; 1.3 million have migrated to Colombia; 94,000 to Panama. Now, why? Why would these Venezuelans voluntarily leave the country that they love?

The current situation in Venezuela is this. Their National Assembly, their Parliament, has been dismantled. The rule of law has been undermined. Judges have fled. The Chief State Prosecutor has had death threats. The country is experiencing the worst forms of hyper-inflation that you can imagine. The country's economy has collapsed, creating shortages—dire shortages of food, water, medicine. They have a destabilized electricity grid and so they have been experiencing constant power outages. Amnesty International has urged the International Criminal Court to investigate crimes against humanity by Venezuelan

authorities in their crackdown on anti-Government supporters and protests. Amnesty International has alleged a systemic and widespread policy of repression. These are facts. The people are living a nightmare, almost apocalyptic in terms. Whether Venezuela is a dictatorship, whether it is a narco-state, or whether it is just an incompetent and corrupt regime, the fact is that life in Venezuela is a nightmare for many and that is why they have come to Trinidad—these, whether it is 15,000, 30,000, 40,000 Venezuelans—and we cannot abdicate our humanitarian responsibilities towards the people who have come here, people who are fleeing the country that they love, who are living as exiles in a foreign and hostile world, adding to their ordeal. There, for the grace of God, goes me.

What would have happened if our country had been totally obliterated by that recent earthquake and we were now all looking to get sanctuary and seek refuge in some other place? Would we like to be treated as how we have seen some of those Venezuelans treated? We need to treat people with compassion, caring, not punishment, not oppression, not exploitation. In international law there is a principle known as R2P, the Responsibility to Protect, and it is a principle that really talks about protection from the most heinous crimes—so ethnic cleansing, war crimes, genocides.

Well, Venezuela is not at that stage. So whether we could technically say R2P applies in this case, yes, that is arguable. But the fact is, people are fleeing because of deteriorating conditions. They are gripped by horror, by fear and despair. And when they come to our shores, Trinidad and Tobago, as a member of the international community, we have signed things like the Refugee Convention, United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the Rights of the Child Convention, and under those circumstances, as long as there is a risk to life for migrants and

asylum seekers, international law prohibits the forcible return of those individuals. And where there is no end in sight for the political, the economic and the social crisis which has gripped Venezuela, we, as a responsible country, have to rise to the occasion and that means assimilating them into our society, providing them with education, health care, and the right to work.

Now, Trinidad is walking a fine line and it is not an easy situation for the Government, because the Government has economic and trading relationships with Venezuela, so they have to be careful not to say or do anything that might seem to be a besmirchment on a sovereign state. And I think the Government has finally got around to doing the right thing. It is promoting the need for some kind of peace talks or mediation. It is talking about trying to give aid. It is trying to regularize the status to those who are here.

We have seen in this Venezuelan situation, some of the best and worst traits of us as a people. I went to a meeting some time ago at the Living Water Community. At that meeting there were representatives from the United Nations, there was the Living Water Community that were trying to do these interventions, and there were a number of Venezuelans. And I was shamed. I was humiliated and embarrassed when I heard how people were being treated. We are better than that. And so, I was so pleased when I saw recently, representations made by the Roman Catholic Archbishop, and even more recently, some Islamic community that fed and bathed and clothed and hosted these Venezuelans. I say congratulations to you. Well done. A couple years ago, I was in Malaysia doing an arbitration training course and there I met a Bangladeshi lawyer, and she was so proud to tell me that her people had opened their hearts and their doors to the Rohingya refugees. There were 1.1 million Rohingya in Bangladesh. And Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in

the world, but they were happy to help. Hindus helping Muslims. The poor helping the destitute, the desperate. It placed a strain on that country's infrastructure and eventually they could not accept anymore. But what an example of caring, a chance for those who were most in need to survive a short respite while governments worked out repatriation; they worked out grants and aid and support from the World Bank and other places.

We have to give these people a chance. That is our duty. And it is not, "Aw", or "poor us, we are getting nothing for it". Studies have shown that there are economic benefits for migration. Right? I always like to say, do not take counsel of your fears and from naysayers. Let us not be xenophobic. [*Desk thumping*] Times are hard, but I want to suggest that accepting these Venezuelan refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, can be a win-win for us. Do not look at it as a burden but as an asset. By providing them with the right to work, they can start productive lives in Trinidad and Tobago and the faster they can integrate into our labour force.

They are not a threat, where they bring different skills, and look for different types of jobs. They are not a threat, where they engage in entrepreneurship, create new businesses and create new jobs. They add to our pool of knowledge. Right? They bring technology and transfer technology. We like to talk about the Caribbean as Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad, Barbados, the English Caribbean, six million people. That is not the real Caribbean. The Caribbean is Spanish: Cuba, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Colombia, Panama. When you look at the demographics, that is the Caribbean, and by having these Venezuelans integrate into our society we may very well be deepening the chance for integration with the wider Caribbean. There could be a regional benefit to it. It can open doors, language skills.

So I want to suggest that helping the Venezuelans is not only morally right, but it

may actually be the smart thing to do. I support a peaceful democratic Venezuelan-owned solution to the crisis in the framework of that country's Constitution. But while that is being transitioned, we need to provide for the people who have found themselves in our shores. And so, for that reason, I support the Government's decision to provide refuge to those who are fleeing hardship, uncertainty, fear and despair.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President: Sen. Sobers.

Sen. Sean Sobers: Thank you, Madam President, for allowing me to contribute this evening. Now, Madam President, I intend to treat with this particular issue in three ways: to discuss the issue as it pertains to generally immigration situations, because I have practised considerably in that domain for quite some time; to treat with the regulations themselves and issue of the regulations that I think the Government should pay particular attention to, and then deal with the efficacy of the regulations.

The situation with respect to immigrants here in Trinidad and Tobago is not something novel at all. As a matter of fact, when I just got called early in 2013, one of the very first matters I dealt with was an immigration issue, and I learnt very quickly, even then, and it still pertains troublingly now, that we, as a society, do not understand the issues related to immigrants, and it is quite unfortunate that certain office holders—not all of them, so I cast no aspersions upon members of the Immigration Division, but some of them do not understand issues related to immigrants. They do not even understand the immigration policies; the legislation involved.

As a matter of fact, in that particular instance, I had no choice, after visiting the

Immigration Division on several occasions and waiting several hours there, I had to run to the court and file a writ of habeas corpus for a foreign national who had been detained, for him to be brought before the court to get some answers as to why he was being detained. On that particular occasion, after filing the writ itself, I had to serve the writ, apart from on the Attorney General's office and the Immigration Division—and when I went to the Immigration Division they refused to accept service of the writ. Thankfully, the individuals at the Solicitor General's Department were very nice and they would have placed certain phone calls to get the wheels of justice turning.

But that situation was not a novel one at all. I had several other matters since that time, dealing with foreign nationals and encountered the very same problems at the Immigration Division. And I, myself, being temporarily here on several occasions, would have spoken to other Members opposite. I think even briefly I would have spoken to the hon. Attorney General that we need to really look at amending the Immigration Act on the whole, because there are several parts of the Act itself that are archaic and backward, as it pertains to the list of prohibitions for persons entering the country. So the Act needs to be amended.

But the situation has gotten progressively worse. The Immigration Detention Centre is in a state of total disrepair. I know on some occasions they have tried to make certain changes to the occupancy there—the habitation of persons who are held there, but still, persons are still treated in less than humane conditions. It is not as bad as the remand facilities but it is still pretty bad. And this conversation, or narrative, about treating with foreign nationals, immigrants, has been ongoing for quite some time.

The Immigration Detention Centre, on this issue with respect to foreign nationals,

does not only cover Venezuelan nationals. There are several persons in the IDC, several foreign nationals here from several different countries. We have persons here from Guyana, Jamaica, as far as the Dominican Republic, Cuba; African nations like Nigeria, Ghana; Asian nations such as China, Sri Lanka, and even India. And one thing that I really and truly have not totally understood with respect to the regulations, apart from the fact that Venezuela, in terms of proximity, would be the closest as it pertains to all of the nations that I would have just called, what steps, if any, the Government intends to take in treating with the other nationals who are here?

I know recently, I think it was Kafra Kambon, who would have spoken out about the fact that there are many African nationals who are here that should be treated in the same way too, and I wait to see what regulations the Government would put forward to deal with persons, not only of African nations, but other nations as well too. But in particular, Madam President, when the regulations themselves were announced, I had a lot of questions about how these regulations were going to be implemented. And so, when I had a look at the regulations themselves, I wondered a great many things.

The first thing that I was concerned about with respect to the regulations is my understanding, and I am subject to correction. I am glad that—I believe the hon. Attorney General would be contributing tonight so that he could possibly shed some light to those issues. I heard the Minister of National Security indicate that this regulation would give someone an exemption to a work permit, but my understanding as it pertains to persons getting permits to work in Trinidad is just as Sen. Mark indicated. [*Sen. Khan stands*] Sorry, I do apologize.

7.40 p.m.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan): Thank you very much, Madam President. In accordance with Standing Order 14(5), I beg to move that the Senate continue to sit until the completion of the business at hand.

Question put and agreed to.

IMMIGRATION (AMDT.) REGULATIONS, 2019 (ANNULMENT OF)

Sen. S. Sobers: My understanding with respect to persons being allowed to work is that there are in fact just three situations. The first being the application of a work permit which is made by the employer to the Ministry of National Security with the actual recipient of the permit being outside of the jurisdiction during the period of time that the application is made and then the application will have to go through a process, a vetting process, by a committee in the Ministry of National Security. Certain things have to be vetted with respect to whether or not the job is a job that a local individual could do and then when the person actually comes here, the foreign national comes here, there is a local content aspect of it where he or she would have to train a national here to take over the position thereafter.

There are also persons who, upon entry at the airport, they can indicate that they are here to work and under regulation 10, they can be given up to one month in any year, four weeks in any year. They would be stamped on their passports accordingly and given an opportunity to work and then the situation with a Minister's permit. Now my understanding with respect to a Minister's permit, based upon my experience in the arena, is that initially the Minister's permit would have been a permit that would have been given generally, subject to correction of

course, to accompanying individuals attached to various diplomatic missions and pending the outcome of a proper application for work permits they would have this Minister's permit allowing them to exist and to work and whatnot.

So that when I looked at the regulations, immediately I thought that it was an amendment to the regulations as it pertains to the Minister's permit, and I looked at the regulations and I considered well okay, so we are going to invite these persons legally and illegally that are here—which is something that I have a problem with. I know it may have been said or accusations have been made against the Opposition that we are operating in a manner that could be construed to be xenophobic, but it actually is not. [*Desk thumping*] I could safely say that some of my colleagues on this Bench have actually taken part in missionary work as it pertains to treating with foreign nationals, not only Venezuelan nationals, in the past. I myself in terms of my practice as well too with foreign nationals, some of the matters that I would have done for them were even pro bono. Right.

In any event, the call was for persons, both legally and illegally, to come down and register, so you invited persons who were illegal and for the listening and viewing public and for Members of the House, when we say illegal, it does not necessarily mean someone who entered the country illegally or did not declare their interest at a port of entry. But it also means someone who may have exceeded their time relative to their stamp on the passport or may have breached their conditions relative to the stamp given to them upon entry into this country and so those persons, unfortunately, would have already run afoul of the law by committing an offence governed under section 40 of the Immigration Act, either entering illegally or by breaching the conditions given to them. So that when you come, legal and illegal, and you register at these different facilities, my

understanding is the Government would then vet these persons and possibly grant them this Minister's permit, so that no Minister's permit would have been granted to these persons as far as I am aware. What they would have been given is some sort of chit to indicate that they have, in fact, registered.

Now, during the period of time whilst they have been given this chit, it allows the Ministry to vet their application and there is where the concern really lays because I am thinking to myself, you are vetting this application to see whether or not these persons may have criminal convictions, be it locally here in our jurisdiction or internationally and checking on other things in terms of their addresses and the form calls to identify with respect to any type of communicable diseases and whatnot and whatnot. And it immediately lit a light bulb in my mind because even when I was considering the Bail amendments, I had a discussion with the hon. Attorney General, although I was not able to contribute. But I mentioned to him, I said well listen, you know, one of the issues that I had is with respect to foreign nationals when they are before the courts if the prosecution would call for a criminal record or a criminal tracing for a foreign national, it has to go through Interpol.

And I was being absolutely honest with the hon. Attorney General and I am being absolutely honest with the public tonight, that since treating with matters with foreign nationals and wherein applications would have been made for CRs through Interpol, I have yet to receive any of those tracings from Interpol come back to me as defence counsel for these persons. And it really made me wonder what infrastructure would now be in place to treat with such a delay. Because if one of the criteria that is going to be used by the Ministry, to grant these persons Minister's permits to work and exist would be vetting their criminal record and

criminal tracing, these persons could very well be waiting for a considerably long period of time if any of their tracing comes back to Trinidad with respect to their criminal record and I have a very serious concern with that. Even in the tea break when I was speaking to the Minister of Agriculture, Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat, I indicated to him that that was one of the biggest problems I had, that you could possibly have persons existing on this chit, waiting on the outcome of this vetting situation for their criminal record and they could very well be criminals operating, living legally here in Trinidad and Tobago pending the outcome of that vetting process. [*Desk thumping*]

And whilst considering that aspect of the regulations, about a week ago, a client would have come into my office and you know, we would have been conversing. He, being a Venezuelan national married to a Trinidadian, has made his application for permanent residency through marriage under section 6 and I was asking him, “Ah say ‘well boy, I know you cannot work’”—because whilst you are married and you made your application for pending PR, it is understood then that the Trinbagonian that you are married to is the person who would have to support you, so you are not allowed to work. If you want to work, make your application for a work permit.

So I asked him, “ah say” “Yuh did not go down and try and register? You will get this permit to work and whatnot.” And he indicated to me, well no, his cousin went” and then I asked him about the process and whatnot and then he is telling me, well, you know, he was told that the papers was reporting that Trinbagonian citizens were actually pulling persons from the line and putting them upfront, or whatever the case is. And he told me, he say, “Listen, is not Trinbagonians doing that, it is Venezuelans who are in the line who were doing

that”. And “ah say” “Serious?” “He say”, “Yeah”. “He say” “Lemme tell yuh something. My cousin told me that in that line, there were gangsters from Tucupita and Valencia signing for registration”. Real killers signing up for the registration. And I mean, it is a frightening situation because you really would not know until these persons are vetted. And the question is when? When are we going to get back that information? And it is not at all about fearmongering, it is about speaking the facts. [*Desk thumping*] It is about speaking the facts that I would shudder to think that we would be opening up our citizens here in Trinidad and Tobago to persons who have that violent tendency back home or wherever internationally and exposing our citizenry to individuals like that.

And I am saying that but I also equally do not want to appear as if I am being biased at all. Because I considered as well too and the hon. Minister of National Security indicated as well too in his contribution that they registered all persons: babies, mothers, children, what have you. What support systems do we have here to also protect these Venezuelans who registered? Since that time to now, I have read in the papers, several Venezuelan nationals who have been the victims of crimes here in Trinidad and Tobago. I have seen and I have read that they have been exposed to being the victims of these activities and I am wondering whether or not the Government considered putting systems in place for these persons who would now become extremely vulnerable in Trinidad and Tobago. The regulations do not treat with those issues and it could very well be that it may have been an oversight but it leaves these people as being extremely vulnerable here and it is a consideration that we must attach our minds to.

Also, when I looked at the regulations, I wondered what was the real cost involved in allowing all of this to occur? The cost involved in terms of the infrastructure, in

terms of the vetting process related to the regulations themselves, the manpower, the resources involved with verifying the information placed upon the regulation form itself. We need to get that information.

And then also I looked at when the information is placed on the regulation forms themselves, if a Venezuela national who would have placed this information upon the regulation form was found to be in error, they would have made an erroneous statement or they specifically did so—they lied on the form—how are we going to effect the enforcement proceedings against these individuals if they are in breach on the form? I would have heard the hon. Minister of National Security indicate that they will be checked on a periodical basis. But how are we so sure that they are even going to adhere to that? And if they do not adhere to it and they do not come back in to check with Immigration with respect to the regulations themselves, what systems are there going to be in place now to get these persons and have them deported? I would have heard the Minister of National Security indicate that there is a task force that is being formed but task force like those have existed before. Immigration Division has a unit like that that treats with enforcement and to be fair, they are not very successful.

I looked at the regulations as well. In particular, the regulations sought to amend section 10 of the parent regulations. In particular, the regulation sought to treat with section 10(14) and it spoke to allowing persons who would normally have a permit under section 10(4), allowing the Minister the grant these persons the ability to enter, and it spoke to allowing—when you look at section 10, it treats with persons who may very well be in a prohibited class and allows in particular section 10 in the substantive Act, when one looks at section 10(3)(a), it refers to the Minister having the authority to also issue Minister's permits to person who falls

within—so this is the Minister’s already substantive power—within or are described under the prohibited class of persons under section 8 of the substantive Act prohibited insofar as they should not be allowed entry into Trinidad and Tobago so basically it gives the grounds for refusal of entry. But in determining whether or not a Minister’s permit or in this case, a work permit should be granted, the Minister must be satisfied that these persons visiting under section 8(1)(a) or (b) are not going to be a burden on the public’s purse.

And when one looks at 8(1)(a) and 8(1)(b), it states that these are:

“...persons who are idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, persons suffering from dementia and insane persons, and who are likely to be a charge on public funds;”

And (b):

“persons afflicted with any infectious or dangerous infectious disease;”

If upon vetting the form and whatever medical information these persons may have proffered on the form—because I have not heard whether or not any blood may have been drawn from individuals when they attended these registration programmes to really check to see if they do have any communicable diseases. What steps are going to be taken thereafter to refuse these persons this Minister’s permit? Are we then at that juncture going to turn our backs on persons who may be afflicted with these communicable diseases? What would the international community say about us then? So I am wondering whether or not the Government considered any and all of these factors when they were drafting these Regulations? I also many in terms of considering the Regulations, I had discussions with persons who were involved in the process themselves and I was informed that members of the Special Branch were present during the registration process to assist with

respect to vetting exercises. I asked them whether or not they had any databases or any computer programmes or anything available to them then and there with respect to vetting individuals and they simply indicated if there was a difficulty with someone, an interviewing individual thought that the answers or responses that were given were possibly not true, that they were to render secondary assistance. That secondary assistance would have just been a follow-up interview. Any actions that could be taken? The answer was honestly no. The persons would have been allowed to register and then they would have been flagged and then they would have been possibly part of a premiere list wherein this vetting process with Interpol would have been engaged. But still, those persons would have been allowed to leave the registration process with this chit, even though there would have been concerns by both the immigration officials who would have been on site and the Ministry of National Security officials on site as well as Special Branch would have been on site as well too and that as well, I had some serious concerns about.

And this is simply to respond to the Minister of National Security. He indicated when he read from the document that he had that there were several persons under the incarnation of Ministers of National Security under the People's Partnership administration that would have granted permanent residency and citizenship. I would want to tell or to say in response to that, there are thousands of persons who would have made applications. Thousands of persons who would have made applications for both citizenship and permanent residency. So if in the entire amalgamation of Ministers of National Security under the People's Partnership administration that may have possibly been 3,000 applications being granted versus thousands more who are still waiting, I really do not know what the sense

was in reading that out to possibly construe some type of misconduct that really and truly did not occur. [*Desk thumping*] There are several thousands of persons who are still waiting. People who I would have met, applications filed and put in since 2011, 2010, 2009 and still have not been granted residency. And even for may be the consideration of the Government as it pertains to reforming policy, that is something that they should look at, with how we deal with persons who have been married and have been toiling here for years and still allegedly cannot work, have not been granted residency, have not been granted citizenship. That is something that they should look at. So instead of bashing the People's Partnership administration for taking proactive steps to really assimilate these people within Trinbagonian society, they could take a page out of those Ministers of National Security books and grant these people and "dem" residency. [*Desk thumping*] They have been there for such a considerable period of time.

So, Madam President, the thing is, again, I do not want the public at all to think that we are an Opposition who is xenophobic or opposed to assisting or lending aid to Venezuelan nationals or any nationals of the sort who are here seeking aid. Things need to be done in a particular manner and I was really, really disturbed by the rollout of these particular regulations in treating with the issue. To me, not being seized of the information that I believe the Government may have had and the Government not sharing that information with the public, I thought that the roll-out was a knee-jerk reaction to a problem that did not just show up on our doorsteps yesterday, it is a problem that we were wrestling with for some quite time and we will still wrestle with subsequent to these regulations. More should have been done, more needs to be done.

I really do not believe we are in a position, as I mentioned before, because it is of

paramount importance to me, the vetting process and I really hope, because the Attorney General is in a position to give that information, what vetting processes they are going to employ to really sift through the troublemakers that would have been coming in. And to those who are here really and truly to make good and a better life for themselves, well hats off and we welcome you with open arms. We will continue to welcome you and continue to assist you with open arms. By the mere statistics and numbers read by the Minister of National Security when he contributed, we have demonstrated that before. We will welcome you, giving you permanent residency and citizenship once you deserve it, but we have to operate systematically and it has not been present in my humble opinion with respect to these regulations and we really need to get answers on this issue.

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

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): Thank you, Madam President. Our National Anthem says that we are:

“Forged from the love of liberty
In the fires of hope and prayer”

We say that:

“Every creed and race find an equal place”

—and right here in this Senate, on the nametags in front of us, is a very different demonstration of Members of Parliament from the House of Representatives. I stand as the Member for San Fernando West and in the Parliament, in the House of Representatives, that is my name, San Fernando West. Today, we have Sen. Vieira, Sen. Deyalsingh, Sen. Saddam Hosein, Sen. Khadijah Ameen—and I am pronouncing it in Arabic properly—Sen. Wade Mark, Sen. Paula Gopee-Scoon,

Sen. Clarence Rambharat. Where, hon. Senators, have the words of our founding fathers, have the words of “Pat” Castagne fallen into our society?

I confess and declare an interest perhaps. My father is Iraqi, my mother is Trinidadian. My name is Faris Hasam Salman Hosein Al-Rawi if it is said properly in the three-name letter rule, and I say that in starting this position to treat with the Motion brought here today to say that we have come from different places. But, today, the Motion to annul the regulations make a mockery of all that we are and that we pretend to be, most respectfully.

I listened to the very intelligent Sen. Sobers. I do enjoy listening to Sen. Sobers’ contribution. They are measured, they are brought into balance. But I could not pick out of Sen. Sobers’ argument the rationale to annul the regulations. I heard concerns as to steps prior and steps post but I did not hear from Sen. Sobers— young, bright hon. Senator that he is—the alternative plan. Because today, if we all say “Let us annul the regulations, let us negative them”, as Sen. Mark vociferously brought this Motion and presented it today, then what next? What is the alternative plan? Is it true to hear Sen. Sobers say, well we have you here with open arms, we will give you citizenship, we will give you residency. Come on. Does that not require process? Does that process not require time? Is that time luxurious enough to manage an economic migration issue that has crystallized in quick measure?

Permit me, as other Senators have, to digress to put a little factual context. This is, as some people say, not my first rodeo. I have lived through personally watching my entire paternal family shattered in Iraq under sanctions, under war-torn countries conditions. Economic sanctions are a significant impact to positions. People ask, what are the policies that stand behind this? Sen. Sobers asked it quite

intelligently. Sen. Mark made the very astounding contribution that this is for registration of voters and the hon. Minister of National Security, Minister Young debunked that theory entirely, demonstrating it to be a ridiculous absurdity in the law and I will come to the law in a moment as to why we are *intra vires* and why if one were to accept the astounding recommendation of the Opposition that we negative these Regulations that we would be doing an injustice to our souls.

Hon. Senators, through you, Madam President, did we witness on television protesters outside of the registration centre in Port of Spain crying and screaming “Go back home, stop registration”? I want to say I recognized some of those protesters. This same card-carrying outside-the-Parliament protesters against the Government, paid for by Members in certain political parties, found themselves making demonstration in a similar fashion, repeated here today in the advocacy, which one can characterize this Motion to negative as being xenophobic. Xenophobia is the fear of the outside of foreigners. And, Madam President, I cried a tear from my soul to see people demonstrating against people in distress.

So let us get to policy, let us get to underlying factors in opposing the Motion before us which is to negative the regulations because we have not had an alternative to an undisputed fact. Sen. Sobers acknowledged, Sen. Mark acknowledged, that it is an undisputed fact, as Sen. Vieira did, that Venezuela is in a situation of crisis. I thank the hon. Sen. Vieira for putting some of the other statistical points of reference: Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil. They have been migrants in the millions in some instances and in the thousands in other instances to all countries around.

But, Madam President, in Trinidad and Tobago, let me start off by saying if we accept Sen. Sobers’ point of view, the Government was required to give its plan in

the open, explain the entire process, then engage in a particular exercise. But most respectfully, there are, in migration issues as documented by the IMO, by the UNHCR, by the International Red Cross, there are what you call push and pull factors—IOM. If a Government were to stand up at the top of the hill on a UNC microphone and say to the whole world, “We, in Trinidad and Tobago, are going to produce an amnesty for registration. We are going to register you. You have two months to get that done. There will be a full process of two months after that,” you are going to create a pull factor which will dominate the conditions of adversity in your country and every country around the world manages the pull factor by being very precise in the registration guillotine. Let me put it that way because it must be done quickly in announcement and quickly in close which is why the Government took a two-week period in a guillotine registration exercise. It is infantile to suggest that one ought to have embarked upon a policy of long run-up announcement and long run-up closing and that is policy issue number one.

Let us treat with policy issue number two. Policy issue number two is taken from statistical information. Our Cabinet, in considering these issues in the period January to May 02, 2019, in particular, considered the data coming anecdotally and then statistically from a number of places. Let me ask hon. Senators, rhetorically of course, what one of the classic positions of proper management is. Is it not that to manage you must measure? You cannot manage that which you have not measured, otherwise the variable is an unknown variable.

8.10 p.m.

And we heard Sen. Mark talk about 100,000 immigrants. We heard people talk about 40,000 immigrants. We were speculating in this country as to the number of people that we are treating with. Let us put issue number one as a fact. We have

had an advocacy from the UNHCR telling us sign the treaty, ratify the treaties that treat with migration issues which require you to bring local law which would then put refugees in a priority position for housing, for education, and for schooling, in priority to your local citizens.

Measure that against the fact that the UNHCR dropped the number of people who they transport out of the country as refugees, acknowledged. They dropped that number from 80 people a year to 20. So you are being told take tens of thousands of immigrations, qua refugees, keep them in your economic buffer zone, give them priority in law to your local citizens, and move 20 people out a year, if so much. That was option number one, take refugee status, manage the situation.

But we know that a situation of economic migration is equally to be recognized. We know that Trinidad and Tobago has taken certain policy decisions on a soft line approach to provide primary health care at our hospitals, support and services at social divisions, et cetera, for economic migrants. But where you have 360 degrees of water, unprotected borders, for whatever reason they may be, I would not go back to the OPV story completely, you have to manage your situation such that you can manage the flow back and forth.

So policy issue number two was measure what you have without creating a pull factor. And in measuring in the fashion that we did, we were allowed to measure 16,000-odd economic migrants, as we call them, and that includes children, women and men. We have provided in our study a period of a migration risk management. We have said six months, renewed by six months. You can work up to one year, which is what the regulations that we were supposed to be negating, by Sen. Mark's mind, are about.

So what is the data? The United Nations says that Venezuela's growth rate for

2018 was negative 16.5 per cent. Let me repeat that. Venezuela's growth rate for 2018, according to the UN statistics, is that it was negative 16.5 per cent. The IMF says that the current unemployment rate in Venezuela stands at 38 per cent. That is bordering on nearly half the population being unemployed.

We note that in Trinidad and Tobago, our Immigration Detention Centre which houses people that you are bound to pick up under law in incarceration, it is not called a jail but it is a jail. It is an Immigration Detention Centre. And I, like Sen. Sobers, have done a lot of immigration work in my practice, which I recall Sen. Simonette has equally done. And what I can tell you is that we saw in the Immigration Detention Centre a 232 per cent increase in detentions, 232 per cent increase in Venezuelans. And I recall going to visit the immigration centre myself, and fortunately my Spanish is passable, more than passable, fairly fluent in the language, and I had one-on-one conversations with persons in detention. And the vast majority of people there detained said: "Look, we will happily go home but we cannot pay to go home because we are locked up. Give us the chance to work. Give us the chance to earn the passage to go back home, to send a little bit of money, and we will go home."

And there you find, in that statistical detention aspect, another statistic. It costs the taxpayers anywhere between TT \$12,000 a month and TT \$25,000 a month to incarcerate these people who have overstayed their stay in Trinidad and Tobago, where the statistics has jumped by 232 per cent.

What else? The International Organization for Migration, the IOM, conducted an exercise in Trinidad and Tobago, and here is what they found out. They noted, in its monitoring of Venezuelans present in Trinidad and Tobago, 46 per cent of the respondents that they interviewed had tertiary level education. Let me repeat that.

Forty-six per cent of respondents had tertiary or university level education, masters, licensed, or technical certification. Twenty per cent had received job offers in Trinidad and Tobago. Fourteen per cent complained of being mistreated at their workplace. Fifty-three per cent said that they face discrimination due to their nationality. Eight per cent confirmed being victims of physical abuse; policy issue number three.

What about policy issue number 4? There is a large elephant in this room, and I mean that in this country, where we witness the fact that Venezuelan women and young girls are the target of sexual predators. On the one hand, there is a joking appreciation for Venezuelan beauty and femininity, but on the other hand "Venes" are objects of sexual predators.

How did they come here? By boat? By plane? By invitation? Is it not a matter of fact in this country 19 Spanish-speaking little girls were found in incarceration in sexual slavery in Trinidad and Tobago? The Trafficking in Persons Report says: "Trinidad and Tobago, Minister of National Security you are doing a fantastic job. You are catching more people. You are doing more, but you have no convictions yet", which is why we stayed in Tier 2, no convictions yet. "You may have charges, but we want to see handcuffs, convictions. So stay in Tier 2." But how do you know how people came in? Who paid the boatman money? What was the boatman's name? What was the cellphone used to contact you to drop you? Which house were you taken to? Who picked you up? How do you gather intelligence if you accept the UNC's plan?

Let us face facts. Politics is not so much a "he say" and "she say" and I blame and you blame. And I heard Sen. Dillon-Remy today as I listened to her previous debate talk about let us stop the blame game. It is not so much a blame game. It is

a question of ideology and philosophy and policy. And if you are differentiating Liberals from Democrats, Republicans from Democrats, left from right, it is borne by way of reference to ideology.

So let us treat with the ideology here in this Senate today. The UNC's ideology, by the Leader of their Bench, is negative the regulations and scrap it. What is the consequence of that, hon. Senators? We are legislators. We make law. The power of making law is in the hands of the people present here. If there was a deadlock tonight, six plus nine against 15, casting vote would have to come in a particular direction, and we would be saying to Trinidad and Tobago that the regulations which allowed for work permit waivers effectively tied on to permission to register, they would be void ab initio. What does that mean? They would void from the start. We would have to go and arrest everybody, detain them, house them, process them, take Sen. Sobers' brilliant idea to give them citizenship and residency status in a process after Interpol gives you the certificates of character and antecedents. Let us treat with it that way. Let us accept the UNC philosophy tonight. That is what you are being asked to do, hon. Senators. This is why I sound a little intolerant tonight, because we are being detained on policy. The UNC policy which moved all of us to be here tonight is negative the regulations. [Interruption] Yes, please.

Sen. Seepersad: Madam President, I am asking the Attorney General a question through you. While I understand, and I do understand the reason why we are doing what we are doing, what I am having difficulty with is understanding what is going to happen to the Venezuelans at the end of the 12-month period? Because you can just not have a plan for them and if you can address that in your discussion.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: I will jump immediately to that. Let us jump to people in

similar circumstances before we get there. The African diaspora, the Caribbean diaspora, the people from Asia. There are a number of other nationalities currently in detention, and the Government is currently engaged in a reconciliation exercise for the other people who may be in similar circumstances. Is it right to have Africans detained, Arabs and Chinese detained, Europeans detained, when Venezuelans are free? There may be different competing interests. The Government is actively measuring that particular issue.

To answer the question put now, which is very sensible, what next? What next depends upon a few factors which are still variables. Number one, how much absorption factor did we have? Two, how much demand factors did we obtain on housing, on education, on medicine, on social services? How much demand is there to return to post for self-repatriation, voluntary repatriation? How much demand is there for staying? Because now, having measured the pot, there are further measurements to be had. And, therefore, we must use data in the course of the exercise to manage that process. Because what we got in the registration exercise was intelligence and certainty.

We now know all the vessels that brought the people here. We know the telephones numbers of the people that brought them here. We know the cars. We know the homes. We are better able to track the trafficking of little girls and Venezuelan women. And our social services, health sector, education sector, are required to now give us the feedback in real time purposes and all of those institutions are in there right now. So what is the precise plan? In about six months' time, I bet you we will have one that we can announce permanently and positively. Because, obviously there are some discussions to be had with Venezuela as well.

We have taken a position that we respect a Government duly elected. We have no horse in the race in Venezuela other than democracy, full stop. The Leader of our Cabinet, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the Prime Minister of Barbados, have said on behalf of Caricom and Caricom has said, "We have no horse in the race". Why? Because we have looked at it from the United Nations perspective from the treaties and charters. But, hon. Senators, how does one stand up and make policy on the hoof? Yeah, we are going to do this and we are going to do that and we "coulda do dis and we coulda do dat". Where is the data? Where is the data? What are you making a policy decision on? No. Policy decision by the UNC. If you listen to the agitations of political opponents outside the House and the Senate, you know what it is? "Doh register dem. Send dem back. Lock dem up. Leave dem sick because you will not treat their medical conditions. Leave dem uneducated tuh grow up in yuh society and leave dem jobless tuh mind themselves." And I said listen to political opponents outside the House. [*Crosstalk*] I do not know why Sen. Ameen is so perturbed. I do not know if there is a Freudian consciousness that is dawning upon her that Sen. Deyalsingh may assist her with. I do not know. All that I can say is that the agitations and fumbling are getting louder. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. S. Hosein: Madam President, Standing Order 46(4) and 46(6), please, Madam President. That is insulting.

Hon. Senator: What is insulting?

Sen. Obika: I do not understand Freudian.

Madam President: Attorney General—[*Interruption*]

Sen. S. Hosein: Unless you want—

Madam President: Excuse me. I am making a ruling, if you can be quiet.

Attorney General, please apologize to Sen. Ameen. She is affected by your statement. Please apologize and move on.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Of course, Madam. I unreservedly apologize to Sen. Ameen for her disturbance at the words that I offer to political opponents. I cannot do anything other than apologize for the fact that she has associated herself with that, but I must apologize for that. Her choice, my apology. So said, so done.

Sen. Ameen: Madam President, Madam President, that is not what the issue is.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Is that a Standing Order? Thank you, I am continuing. So Madam President—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ameen: Yes, I am—46(6), Madam President.

Madam President: I am listening.

Sen. Ameen: I mean 46(6) and 46(4). I think the Attorney General should do better than that.

Madam President: Attorney General—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ameen: If you are apologizing, you are apologizing.

Madam President:—please withdraw your comment about Sen. Ameen and move on.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: I did and I will withdraw now again for the second time. But there is an art of debate, Madam President, and I am a fairly skilful debater, which is why I have chosen my words carefully. A debate can, of course, have a number of effects and I have apologized for what I have said already, but people must learn to take their pressure well. "Cyah be giving pressure and fraid tuh take pressure", especially when it comes to my quarter, Madam President. I am not afraid to say what I have to say the way I ought to say it.

We are talking real in the context of policy and we are talking real in the context of

what happens next, which is a germane and important conversation.

Madam President: Attorney General—Sen. Thompson-Ahye, you have to ask the Attorney General if he will give way.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Oh sorry.

Sen. Thompson-Ahye: Will you give way?

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Yes, of course.

Sen. Thompson-Ahye: Madam President, through you, I have heard the Attorney General say that you have taken into consideration all the United Nations documents, the treaties, the conventions. I assume that that is what you said. And as a skillful debater, you did say that you have taken these things, and I take it that you know exactly what you are about. Now, the word "priority" suggests to me that there is level above. So if you have priority, you come before and, therefore, the playing field is no longer equal. Someone who has priority comes before someone else.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child speaks to the principle of non-discrimination. If you cannot discriminate, then you cannot give one priority over the other and in that principle, you cannot then say that your policy is one. When I say “your policy”, I mean plural your, the Government, that you cannot—that you are giving priority to your nationals, in terms of education.

Madam President: Sen. Thompson-Ahye, if I may assist. You have asked the Attorney General to give way because I take it you want to ask him a question, so you need to—because the Attorney General is making his contribution so you need to ask him his question so that he can answer.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Just may I ask, Madam President, what time am I bound to end in full time?

Madam President: You are finishing at 20 to nine.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Twenty to nine. Please Senator, could you please ask?

Sen. Thompson-Ahye: Please, could you explain how the principle of non-discrimination works with the principle of giving priority to your nationals, when all children within the jurisdiction are entitled to an education?

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Sure, thank you. Very sensible question. So there are competing interests in the prioritization/non-discrimination aspects and Convention of the child is one of the treaties that we are bound to oblige. We have done it in many aspects of our laws.

Firstly, the application of an equity principle will be borne on the back of the data that we have. Who do we have? What are the age brackets? Where should they fit into? That is now being factored. So, we could not have just simply said: "Well, before we register you and we issue you the certificate, everybody turn up at school. It would have been an illogical approach to treat with it that way. So, as the hon. Minister of National Security put on to the record, we have not yet issued the cards because the data scrubbing is continuing right now. We have to move with alacrity right now to treat with health care. I know the Minister of Health has already treated with that. He has gone public in terms of the access to health care, et cetera.

The second aspect that we must treat with, with urgency, is the issue of education. We are now upon the end of the school term and there is the break and hiatus, maybe fortuitous as it comes, but certainly that is something that the Minister of Education will be speaking to on the back of the process of registration. But the health aspects have already been treated with.

What the social services and any input coming from international agencies looks

like is also being worked out right now. Because the International Red Cross, the UNHCR, a number of entities, NGOs, et cetera, are approaching the Government and we are having discussions with them.

So, contrary to the exhortations of Sen. Sobers and Sen. Mark, this is—
[*Interruption*]

Sen. Thompson-Ahye: Have you answered my question?

Sen. Ameen: No.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: I have answered it as best as I can. Would you like me to answer it in a different way?

Sen. Ameen: The answer is no.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Sorry, I do not listen to Sen. Ameen at all. So do not be disturbed by that. You asked me a question: How do I treat with priority versus equality? And I said that our priority is the current position at present, because we had to treat with the point. I was making the point that it is in the last month in particular, two months in particular, that the waves have come at us. And I am saying that our registration exercise will treat us now with the data as to how we treat with equalizing that position from a Convention on the Rights of the Child perspective. We could not just do it without the data management. So we are working our way towards; that is the answer.

Sen. Ameen: So, the answer is no.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Okay? Madam President, perhaps Sen. Thompson-Ahye will join the debate and put the positions better so that we can actually have another speaker answer these positions. Let me put it this way. [*Interruption*] Please, Sen. Obika, Madam President.

Madam President: Sen. Obika. Members, I have repeatedly asked for silence

while anyone is making their contribution. Attorney General.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Thank you. Madam President, I would like to say this to a very passionate Senator when it comes to issues of the child in particular, and Sen. Thompson-Ahye knows that I feel this way genuinely about it. There is no perfect answer to this question. We cannot, as of today, certainly I as Attorney General, speaking on behalf of the Government, cannot give a hard and fast answer immediately without the data construction and the Cabinet's decision. We do not make policy on the hoof and I am embargoed from speaking off the cuff as to immediate answers on certain issues.

What we do know is that the regulations before us now are borne on the back of section 44 of the immigration law. Section 44 allows for the subsidiary legislation to be promulgated. In the subsidiary legislation being promulgated in regulation 10, in regulation 10 we have saved law; the law, as it relates to the ability to make an order under subsidiary legislation. Because you are making an order for a variation under the regulation. That law is saved, because it was 1974 law, prior to the 1976 Constitution. And, therefore, we are properly *intra vires* in the manner in which we are making law.

What does the law say? The law says that we will allow for this category of people to do one thing in particular, be able to work, be able to work without a work permit. And contrary to the argument by Sen. Mark, that we were outside the parameters of section 8 of the Immigration Act, permit me to put on to the record that Sen. Mark has clearly avoided the recommendation that all lawyers and certainly legislators have, that the law must be read as a whole. Section 8 of the Immigration Act, Chap. 18:01, cannot be read in the vacuum of section 8 by itself. You must read it along with section 9. But section 8 allows us quite properly to

allow for the Minister to have permitted entrance engaged in work, via an exception, which this regulation provides; so the production of the Order.

Now, why do we want to allow these economic migrants or migrants to work? Obviously, it is to make sure that there is some gainful participation and dignity that they may enjoy in having a job to at least help to afford accommodation, schooling, medicine, enjoiment, et cetera. That feeds into the rights of their children and their spouses. So what is before us is the recommendation of the UNC to scrap the regulation. Do not have the order stand in law, lock up the people, do not allow them to work, send them back home. Because effectively, to return the law to void ab initio is to do that. If you negative the regulations that is what you are doing. We say keep the regulations alive, keep the order alive.

Madam President: Attorney General, you have five more minutes.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Allow the Venezuelans who are the subject of this position, who have registered, the privilege of working on the back of a system of registration that is being monitored, so that the tangential data can be produced. How many are there? How many children? How many women? How many educational opportunities must be provided? How much social services and support must be provided?

And, therefore, we say that this particular recommendation coming from the UNC must be rejected out of hand. It is immoral in some senses, from a conscionable point of view, to engage in that particular course. It is certainly illogical. It will bear significant expense, in terms of operationalization. If we were to negative this, we would have to literally go and lock up 16,000 people immediately; leave them poor, penniless, broken and incarcerated; eventually find some mechanism to transport 16,000 people out of Trinidad and Tobago, having to

get the Venezuelan Government to actually verify that they are Venezuelan, because you cannot repatriate someone unless you prove that they belong to the country that you want to repatriate them to. So it is an absolute absurdity to recommend what the UNC is recommending, and they do so with aplomb. They do so with a straight face. They do so with convincing tones. They do so by measured contributions, as Sen. Sobers gave us this afternoon.

So hon. Senators, the regulation, the order, as promulgated by the Government, is proportionate. It is rational. It is conscionable. It is moral. It is sensible. It is something to allow us to achieve an aspiration of what we used to be, or certainly of what we pride ourselves in being. And with those words, Madam President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Saddam Hosein: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to contribute to this debate on the Immigration Regulations. And from the outset, Madam President, let me tell you, and I am telling the country as a whole, that this Government, it came in a surreptitious, clandestine manner in which to introduce this particular piece of legislation.

Imagine the Minister of National Security will find it fit to issue an entire press release when it comes to a Facebook post, but when it comes to setting up the legislative framework for the registration of Venezuelans you say nothing. If it was not for the vigilance of the Opposition, we would not be here tonight debating the policy of the Government with respect to the Venezuelan registration procedure [*Desk thumping*] at all. This came like "ah tief in de night", Madam President.

I think this was such an important matter that it required the ventilation of every

single Member of the Senate and every single Member of Parliament in the other place, Madam President. And that is what the Opposition did. We gave the people a voice in this country. We are representing the views of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, with respect to the registration process for the Venezuelans. That is what we are doing this evening, Madam President.

And when this Government comes with this, “dey blowing hot and dey blowing cold and dey come with dey hypocrisy” and as Sen. Clarence Rambharat, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, said earlier on, “Dog eat yuh shame?” Well, “Dog eat all of all yuh shame tonight in de PNM. Dog eat all yuh shame.” [Desk thumping] And let me tell you why, Madam President. Let me tell you why. “They accusing” persons opposed to them of being xenophobic. They are doing that. But they are the same Government who abstained in the OAS to the vote to give Venezuelan aid, Madam President, humanitarian aid. [Desk thumping] That is the hypocrisy of this Government. “Eat all yuh shame. Leh dog eat all yuh shame tonight.” [Desk thumping]

Madam President, this is the same Government that took the position that there is no crisis in Venezuela. The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries told the country, Minister Stuart Young, the Minister of National Security, there is no crisis in Venezuela. “Overnight ah crisis happen, Madam President?”

8.40 p.m.

It was since 2016 that the UNC has been calling on this Government to introduce and tell the country their policy with respect to Venezuela. [Desk thumping] But you know what they did? They adopted a non-intervention policy, but at the same time they send the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs to sit down in the inauguration of President Maduro. Hypocrisy, “Dog eat yuh shame.

[*Desk thumping*] Dog eat yuh shame.”

You want to talk about humanitarian aid, you come here to talk about that the UNC being xenophobic when it is the same PNM Government that repatriated over 80 Venezuelan citizens to Venezuela, 82—[*Interruption*]—voluntary. I believe there are a few of them who went on that trip who had refugee status by UNHCR. [*Desk thumping*] Amnesty International came out and criticize this Government on that. “Dog eat yuh shame”, that is all I have to tell “allyuh”. [*Desk thumping*] Do not come here and talk about that.

Then, Madam President, the policy is we register all the Venezuelans for a year, we register—that is the policy, register everybody for a year. “Yuh” come, you are allowed to work, “yuh” come “yuh” children are allowed to go to school and also if you get sick, “yuh” getting to go to the hospital and seek health care.

Now, Sen. Thompson-Ahye, asked the Attorney General an interesting question with respect to the prioritization of students to be registered in schools, and I think it was an excellent question. Now, Sen. Thompson-Ahye was still confused with the answer given to her by the AG. So, I want to answer Sen. Thompson-Ahye, because the Minister of Education is the person who is in charge of the education system and would you know what he said, Madam President. He said that Trinidad and Tobago nationals will be given preference in schools and not the Venezuelans. And that is the simple answer. But I would like to know where the Government is going to put these Venezuelan students because if Reform Hindu School is closed and overgrown with weeds and you have Ramai Trace school still closed, where are you going to put these children? Chatham, Curepe, “it have” all of these schools closed, where are you going to put them?

Let me talk about the health care. Did this Government assess the healthcare

system to see whether or not it could absorb the additional amount of persons who would be entering the system to access health care? Did you all do that? Because to my knowledge, if you look at San Fernando General Hospital on a regular you will see patients lying on the corridors of the wards. That is what you will see. But keep the Couva Hospital closed. That is what you want to do. You want to introduce health care to Venezuelans, but you have nowhere to put them. And that is the policy of this Government. This is an ad hoc, it is a half-baked, hodgepodge kind of overnight thing like *vaille-que-vaille*. [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, this policy is like if somebody went to bed, they dream about this and wake up in the morning and say they want to do this, you know. This is what it is, this is what it is. It lacks specifics, it lacks details and there is no set guidelines with respect to this Venezuelan policy, nothing whatsoever. [*Desk thumping*]

And, you know what is extremely amazing is that in Trinidad and Tobago we have signed some treaties, Madam President, one being the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol to that and also the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. And the UN Convention with the status of refugees, you will have—Sen. Vieira gave all the definitions of asylum seekers, he gave the definition of refugees and those of migrant workers. So there are three categories, but hear what this Government is doing. They are saying that everybody who come and register under the system they are going to be called what? “Migrant workers”. So imagine somebody had come into the country, UNHCR told them that they are a refugee but as soon as you register under this new process, you automatically change your status to a migrant worker. What is that, Madam President? What is that? That makes absolutely no sense, none whatsoever.

But that has a lot of implications, it sounding simple, but it has implications. Because the convention says, that as long as someone who has attained the status of refugee, they cannot be repatriated to the country that they flee from. Secondly, if you enter the country illegally, you cannot be charged for an offence for illegal entry and that is the law as it relates—the international law as it relates to how we treat refugees. But then again, Sen. Seepersad—these Independent Senators ask some very pointed and pertinent questions—she asked the Attorney General, Madam President, you heard it: What will happen after the one year ends? What happens after the one year ends?

Well, I think I know, you know, because I found on the website of the Office of the Prime Minister and another website called news.gov.tt which I believe is government communication. Hear what it says, it asked a question: What happens after the one-year period expires? This is what it says: Sen. Seepersad, after this period of amnesty expires for Venezuelans to register, the law will revert and illegal persons may be subject—to what? Deportation. Deportation. That is currently on the website of the Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Madam President.

So imagine a person who holds a UNHCR card saying that they are a refugee and you register under this process, when that one year is done what are they going to do? Yes, you are going to be deported. You are going to be deported. So when the Attorney General gave an answer just now with respect to when the one year expires that they still have to think about it, and next six months we will get an answer. Well, the answer is right on the website of the Office of the Prime Minister, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*] That is why we cannot believe and we cannot trust this Government, we cannot believe and we cannot

trust this Government. They are making policy on the hoof. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Exactly.

Sen. S. Hosein: They are making policy on the hoof. Then I had the opportunity, Madam President, I wanted to go through the form, because when you look at the regulations that were gazetted and those before us. Well first of all, the form is in English. But I saw that they try to fix that by saying it could be in a bilingual version. Now, Madam President, I did not—[*Interruption*]*—*what is that.

Hon. Senator: You were asking if he wanted to give way.

Sen. S. Hosein: Yes, Madam President. So, the form that is gazetted I had the opportunity to look at the form that is online and clearly there are two—the versions of the forms differ from the online version to what is printed here. Now, when you look at the form you will see certain questions being asked of the persons who register, and the questions being asked of the persons who register are this. It says, it talks about whether or not you have a criminal record. So it is either you answer yes, or you answer no. It also asked, with respect to if you served in the military service? Yes or no.

“Have you...been arrested, charged, convicted or sentenced for a crime in Trinidad and Tobago?”—yes or no.

“...arrested, charged, convicted or sentenced for a crime in your country of origin...?”—yes or no.

Madam President, what background check? What information? Where is the Government going to rely or get information with respect to these persons who came into Trinidad and Tobago to register? So you may very well have persons with criminal records who have been registered. And, Madam President, I take your point and I will move on.

Madam President: No, let me make the point, please. Sen. Sobers is quite audibly saying—nobody is taking me on when I say be quiet and let people make their contribution. He is quite audibly saying, “I made that point”. So, may I just point out, tedious repetition.

Sen. S. Hosein: Thank you very much. And the thing is, there is a next form, it is an annex to the form and this talks about the medical history. So, these are the questions it asks.

“Please complete this form on behalf of yourself and your child/dependent
Are you suffering from any illness?”—yes or no.

“If yes, give details:

Have you ever suffered from the following:

- Malaria
- Yellow Fever
- Tuberculosis”—

Madam President: Sen. Hosein, there is no need to read line by line of the form. Make your point about it please, just make your point.

Sen. S. Hosein: Madam President, thank you very much. I take your point, but I take your ruling, but these are very important matters that I think we need to ventilate with respect to these things being—

Madam President: All I am saying is you do not need to read through everything. Just say there are some questions on the form and make your comment. But, you do not have to read the whole form.

Sen. S. Hosein: Thank you very much. And, Madam President, when you look at the form and you look at the things that they ask in the form with respect to what you may have suffered from. Did the Government, when they introduced this

policy, have medical officers stationed there to ensure that these persons were tested for these things? Tuberculosis, malaria, Madam President, was there any person there, any officials from the Ministry of Health, and any medical doctors at the point of registration to determine whether or not these persons have in fact suffered from these illnesses that are stated on the form?

So everybody, Madam President, because this is a vulnerable group. Do you think if any of them is suffering from anything here they would say yes? They would not. You have to understand the situation, and you have to understand the circumstances. You ask them. You ask them, but you do your work also to check whether or not it is true. [*Desk thumping*] You ask them, but you do the work, you do the work.

Sen. Obika: That is elementary.

Sen. S. Hosein: You do the work. No, you do the work. No, you do you work. [*Crosstalk*] No, you do the work. [*Crosstalk*] Now, Madam President—

Madam President: Sen. Obika, Members, please. I am asking once more and I keep asking, you know, and I keep saying the next time I am going to ask Members to leave the Chamber. Do not challenge me again on this Standing Order. Continue, Sen. Hosein.

Sen. S. Hosein: Thank you very much, Madam President. Now, the Government's policy is that this entire registration process will last for one year, will last for one year. So, I looked at section 10 of the Immigration Act which talks about "Entry under Permit" and the issuances of permits. And when you look at 10(5), Madam President, it says that the Minister, sorry let me start from here. At 10(2) it says:

"A permit shall be expressed to be in force for a specified period not

exceeding twelve months, and during the time that it is in force such permit stays the execution of any deportation order that may have been made against the person concerned.”

So, 12 months. Then when you read that subsection (5), you see that:

“The Minister may, at anytime in writing, extend, vary or cancel a permit.”

Now the point here is, Madam President, the Government is saying that the policy is going to last for one year. But the Minister has the power under the Immigration Act to extend that period of one year. Now, if the Government is so confident about this period only lasting for one year, why did they now put a sunset clause in this regulation? To say it is going to only last for one year. Because, Madam President, if the Government feels that they want to start back registering persons next week or after the year is over they can still do that. Because this regulation forms part of the regulations of the Immigration Act until it is revoked. That is the status of it. So the Government has to explain whether or not the period is going to be extended or whether or not it will be for the one year.

Now I looked again at the form, Madam President, because the form is a very important document in this particular regulation. And the form, at the back of the form, if you would allow me to read it. Because, I think I have to read it to make my point. It says that any person—it says that I understand, so this is where the person signs.

“I understand that if I have given false or misleading information in this declaration or made a statement in this declaration which I know or believe to be false or do not believe to be true, I am liable to fine and imprisonment under section 40 of the Immigration Act, Chap. 18:01 and my application may be refused, or, if I have been granted a work permit, the permit may be

cancelled.”

Now, I am surprised to see the latter part of it, that if I have been granted a work permit it may be cancelled, because this is what—what we are discussing here, according to the Minister of National Security, is an exemption for a work permit, if I am right, and what the Minister is saying. So I do not understand, firstly, why they would have put, if it would have been granted for a work permit.

Now the second part, when you look at section 40 of the Act, Madam President, to show and the point I am making here is that, if somebody gives a false declaration on this form, section 40 does not apply, and this is what it says, section 40(f), a person who:

“knowingly and wilfully makes any false or misleading statement—

- (i) in a declaration required to be made by an applicant for the issue of a passport or other travel document; or
- (ii) at an examination or inquiry under this Act or in connection with the admission or application for admission of any person to Trinidad and Tobago.”

Now, Madam President, this form is not an application for a passport, it is not an application for a travel document and it certainly is not in connection with the admission. Because when you look at the definition of admission under the Act. Admission means at section 2 of the Act:

“‘admission’ means the coming into Trinidad and Tobago from a port outside Trinidad and Tobago of citizens and residents of Trinidad and Tobago and includes entry of permitted entrants and other persons under this Act;”

These persons who are coming, they are already here, one. Two, they were not

permitted entrance, because most of them would have come through an illegal port of entry. So, clearly if anybody makes a false declaration under this particular form it does not apply. No fines, no imprisonment would apply or attach to it. And that is a simple issue, Madam President, and this is something that the Government may have overlooked.

Also when you look at section 22 of the Act. At section 22 of the Act it speaks of persons who would have come into Trinidad and Tobago:

- “(i) any person other than a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago who either before or after the commencement of this Act came into Trinidad and Tobago at any place other than a port of entry or has eluded examination or inquiry under this Act.”

A report has to be given to the Minister. Most of these persons that are going to be registered did not come from any legal port of entry. They did not. And, Madam President, once a person has come into Trinidad and Tobago illegally, a special enquiry is conducted to determine whether or not the person is a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago by birth or naturalization. As long as the special enquiry that is conducted—[*Interruption*—Madam President, as long as the enquiry is conducted and the special enquiry officer determines that the person is not a citizen, a deportation order is made. When the deportation order is made, the only person who can stay the deportation order will be the Minister. And when the Minister does this, what he can do, he can regularize the illegality of that person by saying, “Okay, you entered illegally, but I will grant you something called a Minister’s permit”.

When you look at Form 17 of the Act, Madam President—at Form 17 of the Act you will see permit issued by Minister under section 10 of the Act. So the point is

that these persons enter Trinidad and Tobago illegally. So, therefore, the Minister has and must issue a Minister's permit to regularize their stay in Trinidad and Tobago. All this regulation does, Madam President, is exempt from work permit. So, therefore, if you fail to give these persons the Minister's permit then they are here illegally unless it is regularized by the Minister's power to issue a permit. And I know you may not understand that and I totally accept that, but it is my position that that is what will happen if the Minister fails to issue a Form 17 to these persons, Madam President, and that is a very important point. It is a very important point.

And what about—and I know this is a very touchy issue. They said that persons who were registered in Trinidad and Tobago, the children of these migrants would have also been registered. Madam President, what happens in a situation where two Venezuelans nationals or even one Venezuelan national has a child within this one-year period? What is going to happen after that? After the person—let us assume that the Government position as stated by the Office of the Prime Minister is to deport this person, Madam President. What will happen is that these persons will have their children and when they have to leave whether or not the children can stay or whether or not parents can stay with the child or whether or not the whole family has to be moved.

When you look at the Trinidad and Tobago Constitution you would realize that there is a constitutional right because the child now becomes a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. And there is a constitutional right to a private life and a family life. And, Madam President, the court in Trinidad and Tobago had determined an issue similar to this and there is a case called Hafiz Mohammed Abdul Ghani Rashid against the Minister of National Security CV2017-01513 judicial review

proceedings. And what the court did in that case, it is whether or not—it is a similar case. The parents in this case were of Indian origin and a deportation order was made, but the child was a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago by birth. The court found, Madam President, that it would be very reluctant to uphold a deportation order for the parents because then you would have breached the child's right, constitutional right, to a family life. And, Madam President, this is a very interesting point because this point has been developed all over the world in terms of the jurisprudence coming out with respect to: How do we treat situations like these with respect to splitting families?

And I think the Government again, this entire policy with respect to Venezuelans lack all of those specifics, Madam President, because these are very probable situations that can happen right here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Now, when the Government was—when the Minister of National Security and even the Attorney General responded to Sen. Mark. When Sen. Mark made the allegation of whether or not this exercise would in fact encourage persons to be regularized or eligible to vote in any particular election. Madam President, Sen. Mark did not say that because he wanted to say that, you know. It is because of the utterances of the Government because when you look at the *Hansard* of the 12th of February, 2019, Sen. The Hon. Dennis Moses—I brought a matter on the adjournment asking about the registration process for Venezuelans and this is what the Minister had to say. He said—I am quoting:

“Madam President, the extension of the practice of registering and issuing documentation to refugees and asylum seekers in large-scale influx situations should be welcomed. It is hoped that the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago will undertake such documentation programmes where appropriate,

in cooperation with the UNHCR and other stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, the Ministry of Education”—and you know who?—“...and the Elections and Boundaries Commission, which shall form part of the eligibility committee.”

So then how can you come here and say that the Opposition is misleading when in fact Sen. The Hon. Dennis Moses said that the EBC would have been involved in the process with respect to the registration of Venezuelans in Trinidad and Tobago. Hypocrisy on the part of the Government. It is a total hypocrisy on the part of the Government.

And, Madam President, you would see that the Minister quoted statistics. The Minister of National Security quoted a lot of statistics and boasted, he boasted and at the top of his voice, he said that we granted hundreds of citizenship applications that we granted hundreds of residency applications. And condemned the previous government for doing that. But in the same breath saying that we are xenophobic. Madam President, you see the hypocrisy in that, you see the hypocrisy in that, “Yuh blowing hot and blowing cold at the same time”. What is it really? [Interruption] No man, the Government cannot be so hypocritical one time. And Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan spoke about, we were registering—that the registration process that was gone before—

Sen. Sinanan: I did not speak.

Sen. S. Hosein: I know, we would have had a conversation, but the nature of the conversation would have been in joking manner that we register so much people that we would have been able to win the election, right. [Crosstalk] Right. No, no, no. Madam President, it was a joke. I qualified it and said it was a joke, but Madam President, Madam President—[Crosstalk]

Madam President: Sen. Hosein, please. When the Attorney General attempted in his view to make a joke with respect to Sen. Ameen, it was not accepted as a joke. So please, do not try to—*[Interruption]*—please, please, please, Sen. Ameen. So, Sen. Hosein, do not try to use any humour right now. Try and continue with your contribution. Let us finish what you have to say, okay.

Sen. S. Hosein: Thank you very much. But, Madam President, I will, I will—

Madam President: I do wish when I make an intervention that the next word out of a Senator's mouth is not "But". Say, "Thank you, yes". Move on.

Sen. S. Hosein: I wish, if I could continue, but what I would say is, I would put it in this way, is that when a government exercises its role and a power given to it under any statute it should not be for any political purpose and that is the position. And, Madam President, they may have laughed and said that we would have granted X amount of residency status and citizenship applications. But, Madam President, it was not for a political purpose and I think that must go on the record. *[Desk thumping]* It was not for a political purpose. It was not for a political purpose.

What that probably has shown is that the former Ministers of National Security was in their Ministry doing their work that they had to do instead of trolling persons on Facebook. *[Desk thumping]* That is what it meant, you know, that is what it meant. But the Attorney General, Madam President, in his usual style—the Attorney General in his usual style fearmongering. Fearmongering. He said, annul the regulations, we will arrest everybody, lock up everybody, right. Madam President, you remember in 2016 or 2015 thereabouts when the Opposition did not support the last bail amendment, the Attorney General told the country that everybody "go geh lock up, all the prisoners will be released from the prison will

be on the streets”. Again fearmongering. What the Government needs to do is to be responsible in their messaging. [*Desk thumping*] Stop the fearmongering. And then you would remember the Attorney General said that this exercise of registration, they gathered so much intelligence; they know boat, they know every boat operator, they know every car, they know every home, they know everything. Madam President, déjà vu to the anti-gang legislation.

You remember they know where all the gang members were. Five arrests today. Madam President, that again is the hypocrisy and the irresponsibility of this PNM administration. [*Desk thumping*] That is what it is, that is what it is, that is what it is. But there are certain other issues in this entire process, Madam President, because what the Attorney General said also is that—Minister Young did it, he did all he can with respect to trafficking but there is no conviction. They did everything, everything, everything. He was with his bullhorn outside the—

Madam President: Sen. Hosein, please. You have a few more minutes in your presentation, I will ask you to be a little more relevant and not repeat what has been said before.

Sen. S. Hosein: Thank you. How much time again, Madam President?

Hon. Al-Rawi: One minute.

Madam President: You have until 9.17, if you continue to be relevant.
[*Laughter*]

9.10 p.m.

Sen. S. Hosein: Madam President, I will be relevant because I want to rebut to what the Attorney General had to say. [*Desk thumping*] I want to rebut to what he had to say [*Desk thumping*] because when he spoke about the Trafficking in Persons Report by the US State Department, he said that they did really well.

Minister Young did everything. But you know what the end of it is? An F grade, F you know, F. [*Desk thumping*] That is like if you have a child, Madam President, “he say he do he exam real good, ah coming out first in class” and on report day he “geh ah F; he geh ah F”. That is what is happening with this Government. They are denying—[*Crosstalk and laughter*] Madam President, what they are doing? Madam President, this Government has not accepted reality. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ameen: They are burying their heads in the sand. [*Crosstalk*] Do not let them use up your time, you know.

Sen. S. Hosein: This Government, Madam President, it is a serious matter, you are telling me do not make jokes. [*Laughter*] So this, Madam President, what this is—[*Laughter*]

Madam President: Sen. Hosein, are you throwing words for me?

Sen. S. Hosein: No, no, no, no. [*Laughter*]

Madam President: It cannot be.

Sen. S. Hosein: I am throwing words for the Members of this Chamber.

Sen. Ameen: Who laughing aloud over there.

Madam President: So, Members please. I have heard a lot tonight. Let us—Sen. Hosein, you are finishing your contribution, please continue.

Sen. S. Hosein: But I have some more time. [*Crosstalk*] Minister of Labour, please, please. Madam President, what this shows, Madam President, is the Government is failing in every single regard when it comes to dealing with this entire immigration crisis, Madam President. It is failing in every regard, and when the Government accepts the reality of the situation, then some real policies might take place, because they are in a mode of denial and a state of denial, Madam

President. But you will understand that this entire migration, this Venezuelan crisis, has caused certain issues in Trinidad and Tobago, and one of them, the Attorney General did quite mention, is human trafficking. There is also a high rise in terms of prostitution in Trinidad and Tobago, Madam President, and you would see—you would talk to people on the road and you would see the bars, Madam President, are filled with persons of Venezuelan nationals and God alone knows what happens there.

But, Madam President, what the issue is, is that you cannot bring these people here in Trinidad and Tobago where you have not set up a proper workforce assessment of Trinidad and Tobago and the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development should now pay attention, because I am winding down, because you opened the employment industry for these Venezuelan nationals but, at the same time, Madam President, you have no jobs for the 9,000 Petrotrin workers. [*Desk thumping*] You have no jobs, Madam President, for the persons who were employed with ArcelorMittal. [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, you have no jobs for the 40,000 persons who have been laid off since this PNM Government has taken office, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*] So, therefore, this Government has failed in every regard and I say tonight, Madam President, that when you all have a proper policy—when your Government comes with a proper policy for dealing with this crisis, Madam President, then we on this side will support what you are doing. But for the rest of this debate “dog eat your shame”. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Wade Mark: Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I have listened to all of my colleagues: the Attorney General, the Minister of National Security. I have listened to the Independent Senator, Sen.

Vieira; my colleagues here on the Front Bench and, Madam President, the objective of our Motion, apart from seeking to have it, as I said, the Immigration (Amdt.) Regulations, annulled, had to do with the fact that citizens of this country were not properly given the opportunity to appreciate and understand what was driving this Government in the direction that it was being driven, and we have heard from the Government today that they have a policy and they have indicated that their policy is not to have Venezuelans become residents of our country, far more citizens of our land and, therefore, there is no possibility of these Venezuelans being able to vote in any elections, whether local or general and, Madam President, only time will tell.

We are going to be extremely vigilant, very vigilant on this matter, because I want to tell Trinidad and Tobago that the reason why we have brought this Motion is because the citizens of this country, the ordinary people of this country are very, very concerned, very concerned about the policy and activities of this Government. And the truth be told, Madam President, this Government is not trusted. No one believes this Government, no one trusts this Government, and the citizens of this country, in particular—[*Crosstalk*] Elections? Well, we are waiting. [*Crosstalk*] No, you are talking about the upcoming or the last one?

Hon. Senator: The last one.

Sen. W. Mark: No, the last one, you got an extension of an hour from the EBC [*Desk thumping*] which was illegal and unconstitutional. That is why you won the election. But, anyway, Madam President, let me deal with the matter.

Madam President, I want to make it very clear—the Attorney General has said it, my colleague on the Independent Bench has said it indirectly and also the Minister of National Security. This is not about xenophobia. Let us make it very clear. It

reminds me of the attempt by this moribund Government, to tell us when we make statements in defence of the rights of the citizens of this land that we were unpatriotic. Whenever we defended the rights of the citizens and we criticized Government's policy, we were deemed as being unpatriotic. So they "come up" with a new claim tonight.

We have brought a matter, Madam President, to deal with a situation that obviously is of concern to the citizens of this country. And I always remind you all, Madam President, we represent close to 350,000 citizens in this country, and we are going to expand that to about 500,000 and we will win the next general election in this country. [*Desk thumping*] So, we want to make it clear that an assault, or the possibility of an assault on the rights of the citizens of this country cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be cast or be deemed as being xenophobic. How can we be xenophobic?

We are a party that is all inclusive, all embracing, committed to a united Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] where every race, class, creed, religion, anybody, Madam President, could be part of this movement called the United National Congress. So I reject totally and comprehensively, any attempt by the Attorney General and the Minister of National Security to tag us with a label that we are xenophobic. No, no, no, totally reject that, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, you would recall just a couple days ago, we debated a very important matter here and we were in the forefront. Some of my colleagues did not speak on that Motion, but we were in the forefront, Madam President, in defending the rights of migrant workers to be insured under the NIS scheme, because we believe that they are workers and, Madam President, I said a worker is a worker, is a worker—be it Venezuelan, Chinese or be it a Trinidad and Tobago

worker. You must treat people with equity. And I am surprised that with all this policy that they are talking about, I was sorry that the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development was not in the country at the time when that debate took place, because I would have liked to hear the Minister's position on that matter, as it relates to migrant workers not being able to enjoy the right to have NIS and to pay NIS. Madam President, at the end of the day, we could jump high, jump low, we live in a capitalist society and we have, for instance, a Government that is in defence of that small elite group that will benefit from the exploitation of—

Madam President: Sen. Mark, I am sorry. You have to present, make that statement differently. I have to interrupt you.

Sen. W. Mark: I am saying—all right. Let me just recast it. Madam President, I am saying that the policy of the Government represented by what we have been told today, and what they have done in practice is designed, Madam President, not to provide what is called equal opportunity and equal treatment for all the workers of our country and, particularly, those who we call migrant workers.

So, what will happen, Madam President, what I am envisaging is that you will have a clique or a group of employers, who will employ those workers from Venezuela and they will be subjected to a lot of abuses because of the fact, Madam President, they will not be able to enjoy equal rights and there is no particular law in this country that deals with migrant labour. And I would have thought that by now we would have had a law via the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to deal with migrant workers in this country, but we do not have that. So, Madam President, what has happened to Trinidad and Tobago and what we have experienced over the last few years in this country and more so, the last few

months, is a Government that has demonstrated a high degree of incompetence, its inability to be coherent in policy, and you have a demonstration of hypocrisy on the part of this Government.

Madam President, when we hear from the Attorney General tonight that they have no horse in the race, they do not support anyone in Venezuela, when we know, Madam President, that the Attorney General is saying that in one breath, but when the inauguration took place of President Maduro, its foreign Minister was most present for the inauguration. [*Desk thumping*] So how can you say that you are not supporting any horse in the race when you were there supporting a particular horse. [*Desk thumping*] So that is hypocrisy of the highest order, Madam President. [*Crosstalk*] So we do not buy that kind of cheap talk from the Attorney General who is alarmist all the time in his language. Right? Talking about lock up this and lock up that and so on. Who, who, you know, he has ended up—anyway, Madam President, let me just—I will deal with the Attorney General on the platform.

Madam President, the question here is that the Government has brought a measure, and we are not convinced at this time that the Government is serious about what it is saying. If the Government was serious, Madam President, as my colleague has indicated, first of all, the Government should have brought legislation to deal with this matter. There is no legislation on the books of this country to deal with migrant labour or migrant workers or economic migrants. Nothing, Madam President. So what are we to go by? By cheap talk? By the words of the Attorney General who told this country—Madam President, I want to remind this Parliament, the Attorney General came here and told us he will not proclaim the non-governmental organization Bill until consultation takes place, and whilst he

was saying that to us, the Attorney General proceeded to proclaim the law before he went to Orlando. [*Desk thumping*] The law has been proclaimed. So how can we trust the Attorney General when he gave a commitment to this Parliament that he will not do and then he went on and he did it? So we cannot trust the Attorney General. Talks from one side of his mouth.

Madam President: No, Sen. Mark—

Sen. W. Mark: Sorry, I withdraw that, Madam President.

Madam President: Sen. Mark, please.

Sen. W. Mark: I withdraw.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Standing Order 46(6).

Sen. W. Mark: I withdraw. I withdraw.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Not on the last comment please, Madam Speaker, if you will hear me. The imputation coming that I have breached an undertaking of the Parliament is a gross one and I take serious exception. I ask you to consider it because the statement made as to the non-proclamation says that it was—

Sen. W. Mark: What Standing Order it is? Let him quote the Standing Order, Madam President.

Madam President: Please, Sen. Mark? Sen. Mark?

Sen. W. Mark: Let him quote the Standing Order.

Madam President: I do not know what is happening at this time. The Attorney General has invoked a Standing Order and he has quoted the Standing Order. Sen. Mark, may I just say to you that you have imputed improper motives to the Attorney General when you talked about the proclamation of the Bill.

Sen. W. Mark: That is a fact.

Madam President: Sen. Mark, the Attorney General has invoked the Standing

Order and I agree with the comments of the Attorney General. I will ask you to withdraw that statement.

Sen. W. Mark: Why not bring a privilege Motion?

Madam President: Senator—

Sen. W. Mark: I withdraw it, Madam President, but I am asking you that the Attorney General is using the Standing Orders in a very, very abusive manner because he knows that he is guilty of that, but I will bring a Standing Order—

[*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Al-Rawi: I rise on Standing Order 46(6).

Madam President: Sit. Sit. Sit.

Sen. W. Mark: I withdraw.

Madam President: Sen. Mark—

Sen. W. Mark: I withdraw.

Madam President: No.

Sen. W. Mark: I apologize.

Madam President: Thank you. That apology to me is definitely warranted, and I will ask us, Attorney General, the statements have been withdrawn. Continue, Sen. Mark. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. W. Mark: Yeah. You are talking about pressure. “Yuh cyah take pressure, yuh cyar take pressure.” [*Desk thumping and laughter*] “Yuh cyah take pressure.” [*Desk thumping*] “Yuh cyah take”. [*Desk thumping*] “Yuh cyah take pressure.”

Madam President: Sen. Mark?

Sen. W. Mark: Yeah, Madam President. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam President: No, listen to me. I, quite frankly have had enough of this. You have to finish your contribution and if you continue in this vein, I am going to

ask you to finish right now with the words, “I beg to move”, and with no more, because this is going too far. Please continue your contribution in a manner that is acceptable to this Chamber.

Sen. W. Mark: Yes. So, Madam President, I am saying that the Government of this country, in terms of policy, they talk one thing and they do something else. So, Madam President, in terms of education, in terms of employment opportunities, in terms of the non-payment of NIS by these workers, it is extremely regrettable that we have to be dealing with these matters and not giving the workers the kind of support required, Madam President.

Madam President, it is unconscionable for migrant workers, in the case of Venezuelans, to be working in this country and there is no equal treatment and equal opportunity given to them in relation to our own laws of this country, and there is a sense of discrimination in the law and the policy being practised and promoted by the Government. But we are hearing, Madam President, that the Government is committed to, you know, fair treatment on behalf of those workers and on behalf of the migrants, Madam President.

Madam President, I want to just indicate as well that the Government has not in this debate convinced the Opposition that its intention as it relates to the future of this country—that is the Venezuelans who are here whom we have the greatest respect for— Madam President, I want to tell you the founding father of this nation Dr. Eric Williams, and many of you who are youthful and do not understand what we are talking about, in 1975, at a special convention of the PNM had delivered a statement entitled, “The Threat to the Caribbean Community by Venezuela”. You remember that? Eric Williams. So when fellas and thing accuse us of xenophobic behaviour, Eric Williams, at that time, was protecting the whole Caribbean. Right?

And Eric Williams delivered a statement on the 15th of June—it was Sunday 1975—“The Threat to Caribbean Community by Venezuela”. So you are telling us, it was a detailed attack? Go back to the literature and go back to what Eric Williams had to say at that time about Venezuela. So I have nothing against Venezuela. So do not accuse us of being xenophobic at all.

So, Madam President, if the Government was serious about formulating a proper policy and not come with this kind of half-baked measure that they have delivered to us via the amendment to the Immigration Regulations, Madam President, there are examples that we can draw on in terms of what they have done in Canada when treating with migrants.

In Canada when you become a migrant in that country and you apply for what is called permanent residence, these are things that we could have learnt from, but you have to have a policy, you have to have a law. You must have a framework and you just cannot operate in the manner that the Government has operated. And, Madam President, when you become a permanent resident like in that place called Canada, people are entitled to most of the social benefits that Canadian citizens receive, including health care coverage. That is when you are serious about citizens who come to your country as how Venezuelans have come to our country seeking, Madam President, support. They are trying to improve their economic and their social conditions because of the kind of challenges the economy is facing in Venezuela today. And I am saying, Madam President, there are sufficient examples around the world for us to follow so that we could appreciate how to treat with citizens of countries like Venezuela and, therefore, I reject completely this talk about we being xenophobic. [*Desk thumping*] We love Venezuela. [*Desk thumping*] We love our Venezuelan brothers and sisters.

Madam President: Sen. Mark—

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President.

Madam President:—you have made that point, xenophobia. You have made that point several times in your wrap-up. You need to make some other points or you can bring the matter to a conclusion.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, I do not want to bring my matter to a conclusion, so I will move on to new ones.

Madam President, I am saying that in a place called Canada, people who become permanent residents, which, if the Government come with appropriate legislation to deal with those migrants workers, of course the United National Congress will study those proposals and we will, in fact, give them serious consideration. But, Madam President, I am just indicating to you that these are benefits that people enjoy who are migrant workers.

But, Madam President, in Canada, what permanent residents are not allowed to do is to vote or to run for political office. “Cyar vote and yuh cyar run for political office.” And, Madam President, even in Canada you cannot hold jobs as a migrant who has permanent residence that needs a high-level security clearance. These are provisions in the law of Canada, Madam President. And if you go to Australia, you will see examples of how the Australians have dealt with this whole question of migrant labour and those people called well, refugees, Madam President, in this instance, in Canada.

Madam President: Sen. Mark, really I am very sorry to disturb you and to interrupt, but it seems to me that you are raising new issues now when you really should be wrapping up and replying to issues that were raised, but you seem to be now representing your Motion. So I am going to ask you to please tie into what

has been said in the debate to bring the matter to a conclusion.

Sen. W. Mark: Yeah. So, Madam President, what I am saying is that one of things that we have not been able to get very clearly, have not been able to clarify sufficiently, that is the Government, one of the areas that I would like to raise here, Madam President, on the whole question of the form that the hon. Attorney General referred to and my other colleagues, I wanted to say, Madam President, to you and to this honourable House, there is a provision in the form that is before us that deals with Form 17A. It talks about:

“A bilingual version under subregulation (1) shall be in English and such other language as the Minister thinks fit.”

Madam President, one of the reasons why we are objecting to this provision has to do with the fact that there are other major languages, and why did the Government not put in that section of the form all other major languages in order for us to satisfy international standards, Madam President?

So, Madam President, we know in Trinidad and Tobago that you have a lot of persons who are seeking support and they want to have some kind of resident status in our country—be they from Caricom, be they from Africa, be they from China—and all I am saying, Madam President, instead of having a form—because reference was made to this matter during the debate—and I am just saying, Madam President, that it is an area that I would like to flag that we need to pay attention to, Madam President.

Madam President, I would like to say that we are not convinced that the Government has taken the necessary time to deal with this matter that is before us. I want to support my colleagues' view and position that the Government should, in fact, have incorporated into this form and the regulations, if they are serious and

they would like us to, at least, recognize that they are serious about the commitment that they have given here this evening, that after one year—in fact, six months we are told they are going to review and then one year it is going to be—well, from what we have been told on the Prime Minister's website, they are going to have deportation of those workers. The question that we need to clarify from the Government this evening—and I would ask the Attorney General if he could guide us on this matter—we have read, Attorney General, that there is the question of deportation of these workers after one year. Can you clear for this honourable Parliament and for the country what will happen after the 12-month cycle to those workers who would have been given a chit as it relates to them being able to find employment opportunities in our country? But after 12 months—let us say 31st of May next year—what is going to be the policy of the Government as it relates to the treatment of those workers? Can you help us on this?

Hon. Al-Rawi: I thank the hon. Senator for giving way and I am respectful of his time, so I will be quick. First of all, we have made no statement that there will be deportation after the end of the 12-month period. I specifically in my contribution gave the position that we are monitoring the situation and will come back with further policy decisions. That is something which is in the work based upon the data. So just out of an abundance of caution, there is no deportation. What the Minister of National Security said, people who have not registered or people who have come in illegally, post the amnesty period for registration, they will be deported.

Sen. Gopee-Scoon: And he knows that.

Sen. W. Mark: Madam President, I just want to indicate, as I come to the close to the end of my intervention, I would like to indicate to the hon. Attorney General,

that it is a matter that has appeared on the website of the Prime Minister's Office and it is something that you may need to really raise with the Prime Minister, because that is a public document and it is making a very clear statement that after one year there will be deportation.

Madam President, I think that we have made our point, we have made our case. We have indicated very clearly, Madam President, that the decision by the Government to introduce these regulations in a very surreptitious manner, and if it was not for the vigilance of the Opposition to have this matter brought before the Senate this evening for debate and annulment, Trinidad and Tobago would not have learnt this evening from the Attorney General, from the Minister of National Security and from the Senate as a whole, some of the critical areas that the Government is considering as it relates to this matter of these migrant workers, economic migrant workers and what would be done as it relates to the provision contained in those regulations which, Madam President, we do not support.

We believe that Government and so on, is not very serious on these matters. We believe that legislation is needed to concretize whatever the Government is saying. And even though the Government has said what it has said in the regulations, Madam President, primary legislation is needed and, therefore, we maintain the position that we came with initially, that we seek to have these Immigration (Amdt.) Regulations, 2019, annulled. I thank you very much, Madam President.

Madam President: No. I beg to?

Sen. W. Mark: I beg to move, Madam President.

Question put.

Motion negatived.

ADJOURNMENT

UNREVISED

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan): Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday, the 2nd of July, 2019, at 10.00 a.m. in the morning. During that sitting, we hope to take through all its stages and continue the debate on the Firearms (Amdt.) Bill.

Sen. Mark: May I ask, Madam President, honourable Leader of the House, is there any other matter outside of the Firearms (Amdt.) Bill that we will be debating and concluding that we will be pursuing on that day in question? Can you share with us what other matters?

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: There may be matters to my understanding that will be debated in the House possibly tomorrow, okay, which is—local government will be debated and my understanding is that there is a minor amendment to another miscellaneous provision, very minor.

Sen. Mark: Local government?

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Yeah.

Sen. Mark: That has to come back here?

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Yeah.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 9.40 p.m.