

*Leave of Absence*

*Wednesday, May 31, 2017*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Wednesday, May 31, 2017*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, Dr. Fuad Khan, MP, Member for Barataria/San Juan; Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh, MP, Member for Couva South; Hon. Ayanna Webster-Roy, MP, Member for Tobago East; and Mrs. Christine Newallo-Hosein, MP, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla have asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Audited Financial Statements of InvestTT Limited for the year ended September 30, 2014. [*The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis)*]
2. Audited Financial Statements of Trinidad Nitrogen Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 2016. [*Hon. C. Robinson-Regis*]

*Papers 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**(Presentation)**

**Finance and Legal Affairs**

**Inquiry into Food Fraud in Trinidad and Tobago**

**Mr. Prakash Ramadhar** (*St. Augustine*): Thank you. Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present the following report:

Second Report of the Joint Select Committee on Finance and Legal Affairs for the Second Session (2016/2017), Eleventh Parliament, on the Inquiry into Food Fraud in Trinidad and Tobago.

**National Security**

**Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre**

**Miss Nicole Olivierre** (*La Brea*): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present the following report:

Third Report of the Joint Select Committee on National Security for the Second Session (2016/2017), Eleventh Parliament on the Inquiry into the Operations of the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre and the Issue of DNA Sampling in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee Report  
Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited**

**Dr. Tim Gopeesingh** (*Caroni East*): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present the following report:

Seventh Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee of the Eleventh Parliament (Second Session) on the Examination of the Audited Accounts, Balance Sheet and other Financial Statements of the Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited for the financial years 2008 to 2010.

**URGENT QUESTIONS**

**Government Assisted Special Needs Schools  
(Details of)**

**Dr. Tim Gopeesingh** (*Caroni East*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Education, could the Minister state what immediate measures are being undertaken to resolve the hardships currently being experienced, including layoffs, due to the non-payment of grants to the 14 government assisted special needs schools to assist with salaries and school fees for special needs students or children?

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia)**: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to report that of the 14 special schools, two schools have already been paid. The other 12 are undergoing verification, and as soon as that is completed, they will be paid. I have been told that all schools will receive their payments sometime in June for the latest. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh**: Is there any measure that you will take to prevent further layoffs, hon. Minister? Or those who have been laid off, how are you going to resolve that issue? Because they were laid off because of lack of payments.

**Hon. A. Garcia**: Madam Speaker, it has not come to my attention that there have been any persons who have lost their jobs as a result of non-payment. I can assure the Member for Caroni East that I will investigate that, and if that is the position then we will deal with it. Thank you.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Education, could the Minister state, of the 12 schools that have not been paid, how many months are in arrears?

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Madam Speaker, that is a difficult question, I must confess. Those schools, those 12 schools who have not yet been paid, they will be paid by June this year. In terms of the number of months in arrears, I am not in a position to answer that question. Thank you.

### **Government's Policy on Whistle-blowing (Details of)**

**Mr. Ganga Singh (Chaguanas West):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Attorney General, in light of recent newspaper reports of investigations into leaks of information from the Ministries of Tourism and Sport and Youth Affairs, what is the policy of the Government on whistle-blowing?

**The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Hon. Member for this question. The policy of the Government is that whistle-blowing should be formulated in an organized fashion. It is the reason why we brought forward a Bill for the consideration in Joint Select Committee. Several submissions were received, including by those from the Opposition, and we are in the course of tidying up those submissions to return with a Bill for conclusion of the policy into legislation.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, Hon. Attorney General, while the law is being formulated, if Members within the public sector and others provide us truth as information that is not a crime, is it?

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** I think it would be dangerous to just give a cavalier off-the-cuff response to a matter like that. Obviously, persons may give information in some circumstances where it is lawful to do so, but others may do so in breach of the terms of their contract, or oath of office, which may be tantamount to a breach of a statutory declaration for which the penalty is similar to perjury, including serious offences. So it would be dangerous to give a blanket answer to that statement, but suffice to say the Government's position is that this area ought to be organized, and for that purpose we have legislation, which we propose for the Parliament, to enact into law.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Hon. Attorney General, when members of the public sector are hunted, in the manner in which they are, then the Parliament must provide a shield—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Do you believe this? Ask a question.

**Mr. Singh:** Yes, do you believe this?

**Madam Speaker:** Is that a question?

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** I am sorry, I did not quite understand whether there was a question or not.

**Madam Speaker:** That is what I have asked, is that a question?

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah. I am prefacing by saying, when members of the public sector, employees of the public sector are hunted in a manner in specific Ministries, do you think that the Parliament should provide a shield for those members?

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** Yes, I think, certainly, that the Parliament should, and, more so, that the Ministries and Ministers with line responsibility should act with alacrity, deal with investigations into those matters so that propriety stands in the mix. I mean, after all, one cannot encourage people to step forward and give evidence of impropriety and not deal with it in a fair and even-handed fashion. Hence the reason why it ought to be dealt with, with propriety.

#### **New Gas Discoveries by BP (Details of)**

**Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie** (*Caroni Central*): I wanted to ask a follow-up question. Anyway, Madam Speaker, could the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries please confirm whether there has been new gas discoveries by BP in Trinidad and Tobago waters as reported by the local press?

**The Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Speaker, with respect to matters of this nature I am advised that it is not appropriate for the Government to announce discoveries of hydrocarbons without appropriate consultation with the oil companies involved, because it may have an influence on the share price of these companies. They are listed on stock exchanges internationally. I am further advised that the company, BPTT, will be making a statement tomorrow, at which I am sure all of your questions will be answered. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Tewarie:** One of the issues that arises out of the possibilities before us is the fact that the fiscal regime, which gave rise to these discoveries, comes to an end at the end of this year, 2017, has the Government put in place a fiscal regime to follow?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Madam Speaker, at present we have a high-powered team in Trinidad and Tobago who have already had meetings with the oil and gas companies. Last Friday there was a consultation, and they are continuing their consultations with the oil and gas companies during this week on proposed modifications to the oil and gas fiscal regime for Trinidad and Tobago. I met with the team on Monday, and I will be meeting with them again on Friday after they have finished the second round of consultations with the oil majors, and other interested parties. I particularly asked them to speak to the Energy Chamber and other stakeholders in the sector, and I expect by Friday we will have appropriate feedback from the companies in the sector as to what modification should be made to the regime, whether the existing fiscal incentives should be extended, or modified, as the case may be; or whether there should be changes to the taxation regime, for example, with respect to the supplementary petroleum tax.

**Dr. Tewarie:** One of the issues that will come up as gas discoveries come into play, and Juniper would be the first one this year, is the price at which gas is bought from the upstream producers and the price at which gas is supplied to the downstream producers, and the role of NGC in the process. Has this matter been resolved?

**Madam Speaker:** I would not allow that as supplemental question.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** No problem, I got an answer.

### **Caribbean Development Bank (Details of)**

**Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Finance, based on recent reports that the Government intends to increase its contribution to the Special Development Fund of the Caribbean Development Bank by 211 percent from US \$3.6 million dollars to US \$11 million dollars, can the Minister state the rationale for this increase given the nation's restricted foreign reserves?

**The Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it is always a good idea for new Members of Parliament to familiarize themselves with things that may have happened in the past, particularly from the Government's—whose party formed the Government, to which they now belong, such as the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. I wish to advise the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre that Cabinet, by Minute No. 488 of February 26, 2015, under the prime ministership of the Hon. Member for Siparia, agreed to this.

**Mr. Charles:** Madam Speaker, would the Minister of Finance—the Minister of Finance must be aware that our foreign exchange position in 2015 is much different to ours now, and could he answer the question and give a rationale in the context of the reduced availability of foreign exchange?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Madam Speaker, this Government does not renege on agreements made with international bodies, like other Governments have done before us. It is necessary for the credibility and the integrity of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago when a Government makes an agreement with an international or multi-lateral financial institution, such as the Caribbean Development Bank. It is not a good idea to go reneging on these agreements. What we are looking at, however, is the scheduling of this payment. It is over a four-year period, but we intend to abide by the decision of the former UNC Government to make this contribution to the Caribbean Development Bank, as difficult it may be because we are a responsible Government. [*Desk thumping*]

**Payment to Bay Ferries Management Limited  
(Details of)**

**Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Question 5 to the Minister of Works and Transport, based on the recent reports that Bay Ferries Management Limited (BFML), the company which had the contract to service the inter-island passenger ferries, was paid US \$854,475 for its last 2 management contract as opposed to US \$7 million dollars as stated by the Prime Minister at a press conference, can the Minister provide the House with the actual figure that was paid to BFCL?

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Madam Speaker, thank you, kindly. Madam Speaker, I am asking for this question to be stood down to the end of the Urgent Questions, please. There is another question to the Minister, which is question 10, which is the last question, so I am answering this to be stood down until that time. Thank you, kindly.

**Madam Speaker:** So, Member for Caroni East, Question No. 6.

**EFCL Alleged Corruption  
(Urgent Measures Taken)**

**Dr. Tim Gopeesingh (Caroni East):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Finance, what urgent measures would the Minister undertake to deal with the widely publicised alleged corruption, nepotism and mismanagement now at the Education Facilities Company Limited?

**The Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would not wish to associate myself with the allegations made by the Member for Caroni East, but, notwithstanding my refusal to associate with his allegations, an audit is in progress. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you tell us the audit is being done from which firm, or company, or is it the Ministry of Finance? And when is the audit expected to begin and when it is expected to complete?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thought the words “in progress” meant that it has begun. That is the usual English meaning of in progress. So the audit has begun. With respect to how long it would take, and with respect to who it is being done by, it is being done by the Ministry of Finance. With respect to how long it will take, that is not an answer I can give at this time, bearing in mind the short notice of that supplemental.

#### **Education Facilities Company Limited (Findings of Investigation)**

**Dr. Tim Gopeesingh (Caroni East):** To the Attorney General, Madam Speaker, in light of the publicised alleged irregularities of misconduct, nepotism and corruption at Education Facilities Company Limited (EFCL), would the Attorney General be prepared to urgently lay the findings of his investigation into EFCL in Parliament?

**The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, much like the answer given by the Hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, I can say that the investigation, which is partly being conducted by the Office of the Attorney General, is contingent upon the outcome of an investigation, which is in the course of proceeding by the Ministry of Finance, Central Audit Unit. When that matter is brought to conclusion, all of the matters will be taken. In the event that there is a recommendation for prosecution or action, I would want to ensure that we would not be throwing the baby away with the bathwater by premature publication and, in those circumstances, I am not in a position yet to indicate whether that can come public or not. The key would be to ensure that the correct action is taken and that one does not prejudice the action that can be taken.

#### **EFCL Board of Directors Meeting (Details of)**

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. To the Attorney General, could the Attorney General indicate whether or not, as reported in the local press, the Attorney General attended a meeting of the board of directors of the Education Facilities Company Limited, and if he did, for what purpose?

**The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi):** Thank you. In answer to the question, yes, I did attend a meeting, an emergency meeting held with the members of the board of directors of the Education Facilities Company Limited, because when matters of irregularities came into the public domain, it was incumbent upon the Office of the Attorney General to bring those matters to the attention of the members of the board of directors, and to demand an urgent report, in respect of same, so that proper action could be taken.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Are you referring, Hon. Attorney General, to the meeting that you were summoned by the Hon. Prime Minister to attend in August 2016? Is that the meeting you are speaking about, or has there been a subsequent meeting with the board?

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** I was not summoned to attend any meeting by the Prime Minister. Upon learning of allegations the Attorney General approached the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education, because there is a line Minister involved, to ensure the proper process is done, based upon that I called for an emergency meeting, held an emergency meeting, following which the Central Audit Committee was put into effect so that we could have answers to allegations. Because the allegations stand on two ends, it is important to vindicate persons if there has been nothing done that is wrong, and also to ensure that propriety flows in the event that there has been something untoward.

#### **Status of Operations Enterprise (Measures Implemented)**

**Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh (Oropouche West):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of National Security, in light of the recent murders of three central business owners, can the Minister please state what is the status of operations Enterprise and what measures have been implemented to provide safety in central Trinidad?

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Maj. Gen. Edmund Dillon):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I am not quite sure what the Member for Oropouche West means by “operations Enterprise”. I am assuming that she means what is happening in Enterprise with respect to the presence of soldiers and police. I want to make it quite clear, there is no code word called “operations Enterprise”, all right. So I want to make it quite clear that that does not exist. What is happening right now there is a presence of police and soldiers in the Enterprise area. We have set up/established a base in the Lions Gate area from which they mount patrols, both joint and mobile patrols. We continue—they have



increased their number of personnel, both on the army side and the police side in the Enterprise area, continue to do intelligence-led operations, and we have continued also to intensify our efforts within the Enterprise area, in fact, in the central area in its entirety. Additionally, we have identified a location to establish a permanent police station in the Enterprise area. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Karim:** Hon. Minister, could you say what is that location for the permanent police station? And by what time will we be able to see works, either refurbishment or construction? And when do you expect that police station to be completed for use by the members of the public?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. E. Dillon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The area is just off Dass Trace, in the area of Dass Trace sports field, in around that general area, near to the Early Childhood Care and Education centre; it is within that general area. As to the time frame, I can only say it would be done as soon as possible.

**Mr. Karim:** Hon. Minister, is it a building that was identified, or is it a place, a part of land for construction?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. E. Dillon:** Madam Speaker, in fact, we are looking at two options right now, one is a piece of land, and one, a building that is presently on the site. So there are two options that we are looking at right now, either utilizing the land or utilizing the building. No decision has been taken on which of the options we would probably—

#### **Job Cuts in GISL/OJT Training Programme (Measures to Assist Affected Persons)**

**Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh** (*Oropouche West*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, in light of recent reports of job cuts in Government Information Services Limited and the On-the-Job Training Programme what measures have been implemented to assist persons who will be affected?

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I would like to indicate, on behalf of the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, that at this time, with regard to the On-the-Job Training Programme, it is persons who were members of staff who were removed because there was a bloating of the OJT programme under the last administration, and persons who were no longer necessary for the proper implementation of the work of the programme have been removed. With regard to the GISL, similarly, an investigation was done with

regard to how GISL operates and the staffing, and, as a consequence of that, there were also measures put in place to remove persons. I would like to indicate that the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development has a series of programmes in place for retraining of persons who have been retrenched, [Interruption] or lost their jobs, and, you know, the Member for Oropouche East is always so callous, it is unfortunate.

**Dr. Moonilal:** What I said?

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** That one is suicide, very callous, very callous. [Crosstalk] Yes, Madam Speaker—[Interruption]

**Madam Speaker:** May we have some order, please?

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, Madam Speaker. The Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development has a series of programmes in place for persons who have been retrenched, or who have lost their jobs, and these persons will be able to access these series of programmes.

**Madam Speaker:** Members, unfortunately, the question time has been spent, I will allow question 5, which was deferred.

#### **Payment to Bay Ferries Management Limited (Details of)**

**Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Works and Transport, based on the recent reports that the Bay Ferries Management Limited (BFML), the company which had the contract to service the inter-island passenger ferries, was paid US \$854,475 for its last management contract as opposed to US \$7 million, as stated by the Prime Minister at a press conference, can the Minister provide the House with the actual figure that was paid to BFCL?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the figure paid to Bay Ferries is in excess of US \$7million per year, comprising of a management fee of US \$91,000 per month, plus an operational fee of US \$250,000 per month. Thank you.

#### **Passenger Vessels (Vessels Identified to replace)**

**Miss Ramona Ramdial (Couva North):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Question No. 10 to the Minister of Works and Transport, can the Minister state whether any vessels have been identified to replace the two passenger vessels currently operating the sea bridge between Port of Spain and Scarborough?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** Thank you, again, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, we are in the process of identifying vessels to replace the two passenger vessels which, when identified, will be subjected to pre-charter condition survey inspection by Lloyd's of London, negotiators and Cabinet's approval. Thank you.

#### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, we are answering all questions, all oral questions and all written questions. We will present the written responses shortly for distribution.

#### WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

##### **Caroni Green Limited (Use of Machinery and Equipment)**

**124. Mr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*) asked the Hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries:

Could the Minister provide his Ministry's plans for the use of the machinery and equipment of Caroni Green Limited?

##### **CARIFTA Track and Field Championships Success (Holistic Development of Successful Athletes)**

**130. Mr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*) asked the Hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs:

In light of the Trinidad and Tobago's success at the 46th Flow CARIFTA Track and Field Championships, what are the Ministry's plans to assist in the holistic development of these successful athletes?

*Vide end of sitting for written answers.*

#### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

##### **Caroni Green Limited Retrenched Workers (Breakdown of Payments Made)**

**123. Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh** (*Oropouche West*) asked the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries:

In relation to the closure of Caroni Green Limited, could the Minister provide a breakdown of payments made to the retrenched workers?

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for the question. Upon its closure, Caroni Green Limited made payments amounting to \$1,251,293 to 67 former employees. These payments were made as follows: 43 employees who had more than one year service with the company the payments covered severance, calculated in accordance with the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act; payment in lieu of notice, and payment for outstanding vacation leave. For 15 former employees with more than six months but less than one year service, these employees were paid 45 days' pay, and equivalent of two weeks' pay prorated for each year of service, and for nine employees with three to six months service, these employees were paid equivalent of 45 days' pay. No payments were made to 12 former employees with less than five weeks service. Thank you.

**2.00 p.m.**

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, were any of those workers' contracts prematurely terminated?

**Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat:** Madam Speaker, given the fact that this closure was executed in accordance with the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, none of the workers were terminated prematurely. They were terminated on the basis set out in the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** In addition to the retrenchment payment, is the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries doing anything further to help and facilitate these employees who have been retrenched?

**Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat:** Madam Speaker, apart from the support given by the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, of these 79 former employees, 60 worked as labourers, and those 60 we expect would be absorbed based on the demands of the farmers across the country, in particular central Trinidad. Five of those workers performed work related to security work, and I expect that they would find employment in similar types of jobs, and 14 of those workers were either skilled or professional employees who we expect, with the support of the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, would find opportunities elsewhere in the country. Thank you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Based on your answer, hon. Minister, and the closure of the farm, would these employees be looking forward to subsequent employment in the same Mon Jaloux farm or what is going to be done about it?

**Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat:** Madam Speaker, the bulk of the workers as I said, 60 of them are labourers who have worked, not only with Caroni Green Limited, previously with the Caroni Green Initiative and before that with Caroni (1975) Limited, and I expect that they would be absorbed in opportunities which I know exist in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Could the Minister indicate what use you are going to put the lands that have now been abandoned by the closure of the Caroni Green Project?

**Sen. The Hon. C. Rambharat:** Madam Speaker, there are two sites which were previously used by Caroni Green Limited, a total of about 50 acres. The first site is at Mon Jaloux in Cunupia, the constituency of Caroni East. I believe I have already signalled to the MP that those lands would be used to expand the grass forage bank that exists in Mon Jaloux to support about 80 livestock farmers in central Trinidad.

In relation to the site at Union Estate, that site will be made available by the Commissioner of State Lands to those persons across the country who are interested in lands for agricultural purposes.

### **National Child Abuse Prevention Month (Cost Breakdown)**

**125. Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh** (*Oropouche West*) asked the Hon. Prime Minister:

Could the Minister provide a cost breakdown of the Ministry's public education and sensitization efforts for National Child Abuse Prevention Month?

**The Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the Office of the Prime Minister, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) encourages its member States to observe Child Abuse Prevention Month. The main objective of this observance is to sensitize the public about strategies to prevent and reduce the incidences of child abuse which plague our society.

According to a 2000 World Health Report in the Caribbean, 47 per cent of girls and 31 per cent of boys experienced forced sexual contact. Based on statistics and reports from the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago of child abuse, the Office of the Prime Minister sought out voluntary and paid services to increase such awareness and eradicate child abuse.

The main public relations education efforts culminated in a mass information sharing, featuring child-related Ministries and agencies and a programme within Trinidad and Tobago's main transportation hub, City Gate.

Due to the public relations efforts prior to the event and the ideal location, over 5,000 pieces of child abuse prevention information and communication material were distributed. The cost breakdown for the public education and sensitization efforts for National Child Abuse Prevention month is as follows: the decor, \$1,405; videography, \$2,500; music, \$2,120; caterer, \$4,500; Copyright Association, \$662; tokens, \$7,620; ambulance, free; rental of tables, chairs, et cetera, \$595; graphics, signage, \$20,058. The media campaign: Daily News, advertisements, \$11,970; Daily News Limited strip ads again, \$11,025; *Trinidad Express* strip ads, \$15,592; TV6 interview, free; Power 102 interview, free; Slam 104 interview, free; Channel 5 Tobago interview, free; Radio 92.7 Tambrin Tobago interview, free; CNC3 *Morning Brew* interview, free; Radio 98.1FM interview, free; CNMG *Good Morning* interview, free. Total cost for the media campaign, \$38,587.

With respect to text messages, 200,000 anti-child abuse text messages were sent out, free—no cost. Radio advertising, production, \$2,800; Gem Music Group, \$2,500; Family Focus Network, \$2,587; KMP Music Group, \$2,531; Trinidad and Tobago Radio Network, \$4,725; Guardian Media, \$3,375; Power 102 FM, \$1,687. Total production and radio advertising, \$20,306. Total cost of all the activities, \$98,255.

### **Reduction of Indiscipline in Primary Schools (Details of)**

**126. Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh** (*Oropouche West*) asked the Hon. Minister of Education:

Could the Minister provide the names of groups that were consulted to assist in the creation of solutions to reduce the levels of indiscipline in primary schools?

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia):** Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Education hosted a national consultation on Working Together to Deliver Quality Education during the period January 25<sup>th</sup> through February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 to gain stakeholder feedback on identified issues that would inform the Ministry's education sector strategic plan 2016 to 2020.

One of the focal areas discussed was reducing violence, bullying and indiscipline in schools. The participants included students, teachers, school administrators as well as representatives from the following agencies and associations, all of whom made valuable contributions to the consultative process: national associations, including the National Parent Teacher Association; the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association; the Association of Principals of Primary Private schools; the National Primary Schools Principals Association; the Association of Principals of Public Secondary Schools; the Association of Principals of Assisted Secondary Schools; the Association of Principals of Private Secondary Schools; the Montessori Association.

Special needs groups such as the Autism Association; the Private Sector Schools Association and the Public Special Schools Association.

Education interest groups including ALTA; Moms for Literacy; the Education Discussion Group; the Homeschoolers Association of Trinidad and Tobago. Twenty denominational boards of education: the Catholic Religious Education Development Institute. Tertiary institutions including the University of the West Indies; the University of Trinidad and Tobago; the University of the Southern Caribbean; UWI Roytec; the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Interreligious Organization; volunteer and service organizations, for example, Junior Achievement of Trinidad and Tobago and the Cotton Hill Foundation. The MIC Institute of Technology; the National Association of Library and Information Services, the Tobago House of Assembly. Thank you.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. With respect to reducing the level of indiscipline in primary schools, could the Minister indicate how many guidance officers are currently employed to service the totality of primary schools in the country and whether he considers this adequate, unsatisfactory?

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Madam Speaker, with respect to our primary schools, we do not have a guidance officer in each primary school. The guidance officers operate from the district offices. So there is a guidance officer in each district office that would serve a cluster of primary schools, either four or five.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, in addition to the recommendations made by the various bodies under the consultation, would you indicate if they are markedly different from the 23 programmes and policies you inherited in the Ministry of Education that were set by your predecessor's team?

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Madam Speaker, the discussions that emanated from the national consultation on education with respect to violence and indiscipline in schools focused on a number of measures that could be put in place to ensure that there is a decrease in the level of indiscipline and violence. We did not look at what the Member for Caroni East has spoken about, but what I can say is that arising out of those discussions and some of the recommendations which have been put in place, we have been able to achieve a drastic and dramatic decrease in the incidents of violence and indiscipline in our schools. Thank you.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Hon. Minister, when this issue first arose you had indicated that you were looking for support from the UNDP's Office with respect to the issue of bullying. I notice you have not indicated that as one of the organizations. Could you please clarify whether in fact you did consult with them or any of these anti-bullying associations, which were not mentioned at all?

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Madam Speaker, in our effort to ensure that there is a great reduction in this scourge, we are consulting with many interest groups, including the UNDP. Thank you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Is the Minister aware that there are at least 23 recommended protocols and policies that have been used and implemented in the reduction of this student deviant behaviour and violence? If you are aware, are you continuing to implement those policies?

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Madam Speaker, I am not aware of any 23 protocols that deal with the reduction of violence and indiscipline in our schools. What I know is that at present, the officers of the Ministry of Education are working assiduously to ensure the reduction of the indiscipline and violence in our schools. Thank you very much.

#### **Inter-Island Transportation Vessels (Details of)**

**134. Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister outline the procurement process and total cost incurred to procure the two vessels to be used for inter-island transportation as announced on April 19, 2017?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Let me just start by saying no cost was incurred in respect to the procurement process. By letter dated March 28, 2017, the agent of the vessel *MV*



*Super Fast Galicia* advised the Ministry of Works and Transport of the owner's decision to withdraw the vessel from service with effect from April 14, 2017. Subsequent correspondence from the agent, dated April 10, 2017 received the last day of sailing as April 21, 2017.

In the circumstance, the decision was taken by the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to immediately source an interim cargo solution. In addition, an official invitation to tender was issued by the Port Authority for the replacement vessel for a period of 24 months, with an option to renew for a further 12 months.

The long-term procurement process is still ongoing. However, in order to address the immediate short-term requirements for the cargo service between Trinidad and Tobago, the Port Authority requested quotations from service providers who had expressed an interest in providing a short-term solution. Unsolicited offers were also received. Ten proposals were eventually received, including seven unsolicited offers. The 10 proposals were reviewed by the port management and three were found to be responsive. Specifically two cargo vessels, the *Atlantic Provider* and the *JF 438 Elizabeth Ross* and a barge, the *MV Trinity Transporter*.

The Port Authority Tender Committee subsequently convened a special meeting on April 18, 2017 to consider the matter. Of the three options, the only two which were immediately available in order to facilitate an uninterrupted inter-island cargo ferry service were the *Atlantic Provider* and the barge, the *MV Trinity Transporter*. Both vessels are locally owned. Given the capacity of the vessel subsequent and its historical demand on the route, it was decided by the tenders committee that the best configuration would be a vessel and a barge as an interim solution, while the Port Authority continued its search for a ro-ro cargo vessel. Again, I just want to reiterate, no costs were incurred in respect to the procurement process.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could the Minister indicate whether or not the fees for the vessels are being paid in US dollars?

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Madam Speaker, when you are dealing with the maritime industry, all fees are calculated in US dollars, so I would expect that the quotation was in US dollars and the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago would be looking into that matter.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. Could the Minister indicate the cost so far, and confirm first on the cost, that the truck drivers whose trucks are going on

the cargo vessels whether or not they are provided free transportation by the Port Authority to and from Tobago, and what might that cost be?

**Madam Speaker:** I will not allow that as a supplemental question.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Is it true that one of the vessels took 15 hours instead of nine, because only two of the engines were working and not four?

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Madam Speaker, I do not understand. We are talking about the cargo vessel here. I do not think that question relates to the cargo vessel. Thank you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, in light of your statement in this House before, could you indicate whether or not you are prepared to make public the pre-action protocol letter you sent to the owners and/or agents of the *Super Fast Galicia*?

**Madam Speaker:** I will not allow that as a supplemental question under the question here.

**Ministry of Education Programmes  
(ADD/ADHD Disorder)**

**138. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan** (*Tabaquite*) asked the Hon. Minister of Education:

With respect to the commitments made in the response pursuant to Standing Order 43(2) to the Private Motion related to the Ministry of Education's programme for children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), could the Minister state:

- a) the list of programmes that have been implemented;
- b) the list of schools that benefited from these programmes; and
- c) the number of teachers who have been trained since April 22, 2016 to identify students who suffer from ADD/ADHD?

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The special Education Unit of the Student Support Services Division of the Ministry of Education provides special education services through an established system of referral and intervention. Students manifesting characteristics associated with ADD/ADHD are screened and referred to the relevant professionals for diagnosis, followed by medical and educational intervention. Individualized education programmes are developed for each student, based on the clinical findings of respective professionals and the confirmation of their functional special education needs.

Part (b), the list of schools that benefited from these programmes, I have circulated a list of 180 schools where interventions are conducted continuously by the Student Support Services Division of the Ministry of Education. Part (c), the number of teachers who have been trained since April 22, 2016 to identify students who suffer from ADD/ADHD? Since April 22, 2016, 480 teachers at the early childhood, primary and secondary school levels have been trained to identify students with ADD/ADHD. Students so identified are then referred to psychologists and other professionals for diagnosis and treatment.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Would the Minister care to say who does the screening at the level of the schools in order to determine whether a child has ADD or ADHD?

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. There is a process that is followed. The first form of identification has to be made by the parent or by the teacher. When a child shows signs that would indicate that he is suffering from some disability, then that child is referred to the Student Support Services after consulting with the parents.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Hon. Minister, through you Madam Speaker. You said 480 teachers have been trained to do this. Are there experts in the Student Support Services Division who have been specifically trained and certified in identifying children with ADD and ADHD?

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Madam Speaker, my information is that there are a number of persons who form part of the Student Support Services Division who have the competence and the expertise to deal with this. That is the information I have. Thank you.

*Vide end of sitting for written part of the answer.*

### **BAIL (ACCESS TO BAIL) (AMDT.) BILL, 2017**

[Second Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [May 19, 2017]:*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members at a sitting of the House of Representatives held on Friday, May 19, 2017, the Attorney General had completed his wind-up of the Bill, Bail (Access to Bail) (Amdt.) Bill, 2017. I will now put the question for the second reading.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

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**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 68(1), I beg to move that the Bail (Access to Bail) (Amdt.) Bill, 2017, be committed to a committee of the whole.

*Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.*

*House in committee.*

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Madam Chair, if I could just indicate that we have asked the Clerk to circulate some very short amendments.

**Madam Chairman:** Have those yet been circulated?

**Mr. Lee:** No, Madam Speaker. If I could just interject, through the Attorney General, he could have circulated these amendments sooner.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Unfortunately, it is the Parliament to circulate and not me. So I have just checked the same question myself. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Speaker:** Members, I would just ask you all to be a bit patient. I am just ascertaining how long it would take before I determine what next we do. [*Crosstalk*] This committee is suspended for five minutes.

**2.26 p.m.:** *Committee suspended.*

**2.33 p.m.:** *Committee resumed.*

**Madam Chairman:** This committee meeting is now resumed. I would just like to say to all Members that Parliament's time is very precious and for all those who support the work of the Parliament I would like that, at least, if we get things in a timely manner we will be able to do our part to ensure that our time here is optimized.

*Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 4.*

*Question proposed:* That Clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

(A) In subclause 4(A)(c), delete the word "registered" and substitute the word "licensed";

(B) Delete subclause (4B) and substitute the following-

"(AB) Where bail is granted to a defendant and he or a person acting on his behalf is desirous of giving security in the form of cash or by way of a certified cheque, but is unable to do so before the close of business at the

office of the Court on the day on which bail is granted, he or the person acting on his behalf may give such security on that day or any day thereafter to a prison officer designated by the Commissioner of Prisons for that purpose in accordance with subsection (4E) and the Fourth Schedule.”

(C) Delete subclause (4C) and substitute the following-

“(4C) Where a prison officer receives security in the form of cash or by way of a certified cheque under subsection (4B), he shall issue a receipt to the person giving the security and the Commissioner of Prisons shall cause the cash or certified cheque to be deposited on the next working day at the Court which granted the bail.”

(D) In subclause (4E), delete the word “police” and substitute the word “Prisons”.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Madam Chair, we propose that there be some modification to clause 4 in the version circulated to Members. If I may explain, the first modification appears at clause 4(A)(c) which is at page 2 of the Bill, instead of “registered financial institution”, we propose that it read a “licensed financial institution”, which would be in keeping with the definition used for Financial Institutions Act, 79:09.

The second amendment proposed is a reorganization simply of words, but not content for subclause (4B). Similarly, we propose that subclause (4C) be reworded as appears. Again, the content remains the same, it is a matter of language.

The last amendment that we propose in clause 4 is the deletion of the word “Police” and instead the substitution for the word “Prisons” and that is to take care of the error that we had in including Commissioner of Prisons as opposed—sorry, Commissioner of Police was stated as opposed to the Commissioner of Prisons, so it is in the reverse. So, we are removing the error where “Commissioner of Police” was referred to and instead submitting “Commissioner of Prisons”.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Siparia.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Yes, Madam Chairman, these amendments will not cure, in my respectful view, the defects and the weaknesses that we had pointed out in the debate. For the record, I want to repeat those and to save us time to get to other important matters. I just want for the record to say, I do not agree that these amendments will deal with issues that we raised in the debate.

**Madam Chairman:** Attorney General.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Sure, Madam Chair. We looked at the observations of the hon. Members opposite and respectfully did not agree with those recommendations, and so we have simply tabled the amendments in the position that we have.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 5.*

*Question proposed:* That clause 5 stand part of the Bill.

Delete paragraph (c) and substitute the following-

“(5) Where the security has not been forfeited and the defendant is convicted, the Court may with the defendant’s consent, order that security be applied towards the payment of -

- (a) fines imposed on the defendant; and
  - (b) compensation ordered by the Court for victims of the offence committed by the defendant.
- (6) Where the Court makes an order under subsection (5), any remaining balance shall be refunded to the defendant.
- (7) Subsection (5) does not apply in the case of security given by a surety.”

**Madam Chairman:** Attorney General.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Madam Chair, we listened to the contributions of Members opposite and felt that there was merit in including a provision of consent with respect to the issue of property and that is the concept of treating with money and its forfeiture, notwithstanding the fact that the existing law does provide for forfeiture in terms provided at section 19 in particular of the existing Act. We have sought to treat with an amendment to clause 5 in terms circulated by expressly providing that any forfeiture be done with the consent of the defendant. And we were grateful for the reference to the Jamaican law, which we too had a look at, and so we have adopted a clause similar to clause 19 of the Jamaican equivalent.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Siparia.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I note the AG’s comments with respect to the constitutional matters that were raised where money was to be forfeited. We agreed that the existing law does allow for forfeiture, but it did not say that you could

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apply a person's money any which way for which it was not, in fact, taken or forfeited. So this may assist, but I still believe this Bill is seriously flawed and we will put that on the record and move on.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** So noted and beg to differ.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 5, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Question put and agreed to, that the Bill, as amended, be reported to the House.*

**Madam Chairman:** This committee meeting is now adjourned.

*House resumed.*

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to report that the Bail (Access to Bail) (Amdt.) Bill, 2017, was considered in committee of the whole and approved with amendments. I now beg to move that the House agree with the committee's report.

*Bill reported, with amendment, read the third time and passed.*

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE — HEALTH CARE DELIVERY  
(ESTABLISHMENT OF)**

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name.

*Be it resolved* that a Joint Select Committee be established to consider the First Report of the Committee established to Review the Levels of Health Care Delivery by the Regional Health Authorities and to Rationalise the System of Public Sector Doctors in Private Practice as well as the Second Report of the Committee to Review the Levels of Health Care Delivery by the Regional Health Authorities and to Rationalise the System of Public Sector Doctors in Private Practice, laid in the House of Representatives on November 9, 2016 and March 24, 2017, respectively:

*And be it further resolved* that this Committee be mandated to:

- (a) review and analyze the Reports;
- (b) consider the findings and recommendations contained in the Reports; and
- (c) report its observations and recommendations no later than...”—

We have here June 5<sup>th</sup>, Madam Speaker, but as the debate proceeds I would suggest a different date.

Madam Speaker, I would like to indicate that what we are asking this House to move to do is to establish a joint select committee. Madam Speaker, the objectives of the Joint Select Committees that have been established in this House, some of them are permanently existing Joint Select Committees, is really to give an overview and for Members of Parliament to examine various aspects of the work of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, what we are requesting this House to establish is a joint select committee that will look at the two reports that have been presented. The reports are entitled the Dr. Welch reports, to examine what those reports contain and to give the Members of Parliament the opportunity to make a close examination of the content of those reports and report back to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, it is our objective to ensure that the Parliament participates in this process. It is very clear that health care is one of the issues that continues to be a concern in Trinidad and Tobago, and the report that has been laid in the Parliament attempts to give solutions to the issues that have plagued the health-care system in Trinidad and Tobago.

Our objective therefore, is to allow the people's representatives to go through a detailed analysis of the report, to come back to the Parliament and give their findings as it relates to the report, whether they agree, whether they disagree with some of the findings and recommendations that the report has given, but to allow the people's representatives through the process of a Joint Select Committee to examine the report in-depth.

Madam Speaker, it is clear that, for transparency and also for all Members in this House to be given the opportunity to examine the report in-depth, the best mechanism for doing this, we feel on this side, is through the mechanism of a joint select committee.

I am asking that the Members on the opposite side agree with us on this side that such a committee be established, and that once that agreement is had that this matter will go before the Senate for a similar agreement to be reached.

Madam Speaker, I do not think I need to go into the merits or demerits of why we need a joint select committee, but a joint select committee is not something that is foreign to the parliamentary process. And I am of the firm view that once we establish the Joint Select Committee, we can review and analyze the reports; we



can consider all the findings, in-depth and in detail, and make recommendations whether we agree or disagree with the recommendations that are within the reports; and we can report our observations and recommendations to this House. Madam Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

*Question proposed.*

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Fyzabad [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Lackram Bodoë (Fyzabad):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute on this very important Motion. I would just want, for the records, to indicate with regard to the Motion:

“*Be it resolved* that a Joint Select Committee be established to consider the First Report of the Committee established to Review the Levels of Health Care Delivery by the Regional Health Authorities and to Rationalise the System of Public Sector Doctors in Private Practice as well as the Second Report of the Committee to Review the Levels of Health Care Delivery by the Regional Health Authorities and to Rationalise the System of Public Sector Doctors in Private Practice, laid in the House of Representatives on November 9, 2016 and March 24, 2017, respectively.”

And the Motion further goes onto to state:

- “(a) review and analyze the Reports;
- (b) consider the findings and recommendations contained in the Reports; and
- (c) report its observations and recommendations no later than June 5, 2017.”

Madam Speaker, I thank the Minister of Planning and Development for the opportunity to provide Members of this House the opportunity to look and examine issues in the health sector. Before I go further, I would want to take note of the fact that the date of June 5<sup>th</sup>, and I agree that that is a very restrictive date and I would look forward to more comment on that date.

Madam Speaker, after crime and the economy, health care and health service provision remain uppermost in the minds of the population today. In fact, I agree with the Minister that health care is of concern in Trinidad and Tobago and, in fact, it might be high up on the list of concerns. Many have said that the health sector has deteriorated under this Government and that the health sector is in crisis.

An *Express* article of April 22, 2017, written by Camille Hunte, says that:

“Crisis in nation’s hospitals”

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And if you will permit me to quote from this newspaper article, Madam Speaker. The article notes that the 2017 national budget allocation is \$6.25 billion, but it goes on to state, and I quote:

“But there are still too few public hospital beds; too many patients waiting years for life-saving surgeries; too many shortcomings in maintenance of vital equipment such as the recent fiasco with the CT...scanners; the horrendously long time patients have to wait for health care...and the list goes on.”

And I quote again.

“Urgently needed medications run short while patients wait in long lines for prescriptions to be filled.

Infant mortality remains a challenge while a brand new...hospital lies dormant and unoccupied.”

So this is what this newspaper report is saying. Some are saying that the health sector is terminally ill in need of urgent resuscitation—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1), please.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Fyzabad, I will allow you some leeway. Remember all this has to deal with is the appointment of the Joint Select Committee. Okay? So while I will allow you some leeway for context, remember reviewing and analysing is what is the mandate of the committee considering findings, its recommendations, so it is not really a debate about the health sector. So just be careful.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I am so guided. Madam Speaker, I want to indicate that I am just providing a context for discussion of the report, and will get to the report and look at a few details, but I just thought that it was important to provide the context. And in fact, I am agreeing with the Member who indicated that there is some sort of crisis in the health sector and that is what I am speaking about.

So, I will just in passing, Madam Speaker, without quoting from these reports, just again to note, if you may allow:

“Health sector needs emergency care”

This is September 25, 2016. I am just providing a background, Madam Speaker.

With regard to the CT scanners:

Port of Spain, Sangre Grande, San Fernando scanners down

“Mt Hope alone serving T&T”

This is March 28, 2017, and there are several articles that pertain to the—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1).

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I will ask you not to dwell. If you are saying that is answering the crisis, I will allow you, as I said, some latitude, but please, this is not the debate about the health sector or the crisis in the health sector. [*Crosstalk*]

Member for Caroni Central, the report is not before us. And while I should not recognize you, I will. I know that matters of health might be very important to all of us and, therefore, I will ask each Member to please observe the Standing Orders and control their anxiety. Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. L. Bodoe:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I will be so guided. And in fact, just to perhaps explain to the House where I am going with this, really and truly what I am trying to show is that although there have been many ills reported in the health sector, there have also been some good things that have happened and I was coming to this point. And if the Member will permit me to just delve a little bit further and I will come to what is also the sector's; the good things that are happening in the sector. [*Crosstalk*]

So, Madam Speaker, so we are all aware that there have been numerous reports and I have categorized these under diagnostics, under drug shortages and cancer care, a number of articles regarding customer service. And again, you know, with caution, Madam Speaker, I think it is important to understand why this debate is important. In fact, this is perhaps the reason why this report has been commissioned in the first place because of all these issues. And you know, with caution, I would want to, you know, and there are some things that are pointing, for example, hospitals at crisis point, institutions have less than half the staff needed. And I say that, Madam Speaker, because the issue of staff is addressed in this report. And of course, there is an article on public doctors in private practice and all of this is within the report and this is in today's newspaper.

But be that as it may, Madam Speaker, we are all aware of the situation that is facing us, but I also wanted, before I went into the report, to note and again, there is a point I am making here because the issue of health care really has to be developed on both sides.

And I was going to speak about, you know, often we here in this House of the continuity of government. And with regard to that I was going to speak about the backlog on non-communicable diseases and the improvements in maternity care. I

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am taking this forward to show that, of course, a JSC can benefit the country by looking at this report. [*Crosstalk*] I am getting to a point, Member. Do not get too upset. [*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Could we have some order.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** And I am saying—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Members, might I remind you of Standing Order 53 with respect to Members not speaking. Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, I am saying that the health sector, when we speak about continuity of government, the health sector is one such area, but this has to be practised. And you know, the reason for this is because there are certain interventions in health care where the provision and the end result is not immediately available. In my own field it refers to a gestation period. In other words, an intervention is taken, you know, six months ago, but it now becomes apparent, and the reduction in infant and maternal mortality is one such outcome.

The Member for St. Joseph, Minister of Health, is, you know, justifiably happy whenever he speaks on these issues, but of course the Member will also admit that and, you know, I appreciate the fact that he is taking a very personal interest in this. But he will also appreciate the fact that the groundwork for this intervention would have started under the previous Government [*Desk thumping*] and of course that would have been in the appointment of a committee to review the maternity services which, of course, was commissioned by the previous Prime Minister, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

But be that as it may, I think it is important that the Minister would have bought into it, and I note that he has appointed a director of women's health, very, very important position in regard to maternity services.

So the point I am making is that it is important for Ministers in successive Governments to be able to build on previous improvements, but also whilst adding their own value as this Minister has done going forward. That is the point I am making, Madam Speaker.

**3.00 p.m.**

With regard to that report, Madam Speaker, through you, if I may, and again I am just here in terms of making suggestions, if I can invite the Minister—and that is one important position that came out of that report, and Minister, if I can invite you to give serious consideration to another recommendation that came from that report and—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Might I ask, are we talking about the November 09, 2016 report and the March 2017 report?

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Yes.

**Madam Speaker:** And all I am saying Member is that the review and analysis of the report, the observations, and the recommendations is what is the mandate of the JSC that we are asking to appoint. So I am not going to allow us to go into any analysis, review, recommendations here.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I am guided.

So, Madam Speaker, let us then examine the report that is before us today—without debating the report—and before I go or mention any details of the report, I just want to make some broad observations about the report. And the reason for this is because we are asking Members to sit on a Joint Select Committee, and therefore I think it is only fair that perhaps, those Members who are going to sit on the Joint Select Committee have some idea, you know, of what the report is about in terms of—[*Interruption*] [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member, while I would allow you, I will ask you to keep it very tight.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

So, on page 1 of the report—and if you would permit me just to refer, because this in fact is the report that is before us—we note that by letters dated November 15, 2015, the Cabinet of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago established a committee and the mandate of the committee, of course, was to review the levels of health care delivery by the RHAs and to rationalize a system of public sector doctors in private practice.

Madam Speaker, I also note that these reports were presented to the House some 12 months later for the first report, and 16 months later. I just want again, and if you will permit me—and I made the point of the report being commissioned on 15<sup>th</sup> November, and if you will just permit me to refer to an article of the *Trinidad Express*, November 25, 2015, and again this refers to the great public expectation that is associated with this report. The report is entitled “Another health shame” by the *Trinidad Express*, but I just want to make the point and just to quote from this report:

“Amid the grand sweep of a ‘health sector review’ by a blue-chip team of Government-appointed experts, serial performance failures such as these continue as reminders of the distance to go toward meeting routine service expectations.”

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1) please.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, could you please move on to your other point.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Madam that report was just to indicate that the public is awaiting the results of this debate.

**Madam Speaker:** And just move on.

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Speaker, I just want to seek some clarification, please.

**Madam Speaker:** Is it on a Standing Order?

**Mr. Lee:** I am seeking clarification, please.

**Madam Speaker:** Under what Standing Order? [*Interruption*] Members? Again, I would like Members who are not speaking to observe the Standing Orders, please. Member, is it a Standing Order that you are raising?

**Mr. Lee:** I just need some leeway from you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** But it has to be pursuant to a Standing Order, Member. Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, the Motion before us asks us to consider sending this report to a Joint Select Committee, and the question in my mind is whether sending this report to a Joint Select Committee of this Parliament, and by so doing, of course engaging the time, the energy and the effort of the Members, will do one of two things: Will it bring measurable improvement in the delivery of health care to the citizens—and I am asking this question—and, whether it will improve the health status of the nation?

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the Motion tells us that the mandate of the JSC will be to review and analyze the reports, to consider the findings and recommendations contained in the report, and to report its observations and recommendations. Well, Madam Speaker, the output of the findings and deliberations of any Joint Select Committee will, of course, depend on what it is fed, the input. So, I think it is only fair that I should look at the quality of the reports and make some comments, and this is where I am going, Madam Speaker.

I also want to make it very clear at the onset that we on this side are willing to offer any and all assistance to the Government when it comes to treating with health care and indeed all other issues that are now engaging the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. So, with this in mind, Madam Speaker, I again want to refer to page 1 of the report, where it speaks of the levels of health care delivery, but I

also note that the committee did not take the opportunity to tell the reader of this report what was their definition of levels of health care delivery. Instead, the reader is left guessing as to what the committee's interpretation of levels means. And perhaps, maybe the Minister of Health might want to, in his contribution, speak further to this. But I ask the Government through you, Madam Speaker, what exactly those levels include, and does it include the efficiency of services? Does it include the effectiveness of interventions?

**Madam Speaker:** Member, again, while I appreciate your overall point in terms of saying what is fed in could only affect what is fed out, I am not going to let you go into the observations which, as a committee, if it had to deliberate it could look at that as an observation. So, as far as broadly dealing with it as you said in your first statement, I will allow that. Please, be careful.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, I am so guided. I just, again, would move on and make a few other comments, and one of the issues for a member sitting on the Joint Select Committee to examine this report would be the lack of statistics and references to support many of the recommendations, I wanted to make that point. And it appears in fact that this report may be neither data driven nor data backed. Some of the recommendations I noticed were broad, that they may be difficult for Members to deliberate, and indeed it is my opinion that some of these recommendations would have been better—I am not saying all, I am saying some—analyzed by a technical team from the Ministry of Health. And these are just suggestions I am throwing out, Madam Speaker, so that the work of the Joint Select Committee becomes more focused and becomes more fruitful and more productive.

Of course, one can also note that many of these recommendations point to policy direction and guidance by the Government, by the Executive as opposed to input from parliamentarians. Indeed, Madam Speaker, several of these recommendations have already been implemented, and I will just refer to the report briefly in passing now, if you will permit me to explain why I have arrived at these conclusions. So, if I can direct your attention to page 13 of the report, if you look at the report under primary health care. For example, if we look at the health centre steps, that is the second paragraph of the report on page 13—I am referring directly to it now—some of the recommendations here are speaking to extended hours in strategically selected health centres, just to note that extended hours have already been implemented in many health centres, but, of course, there is always the need for more, and perhaps the Minister could give consideration to extending those extended hours.

The reliable scheduling of medical services; guaranteed and adequate medical presence, and again what is the reality of the situation here? The issue here really, is it that the doctors are not staying in the health centres in certain hours? But, again, those point to management issues. I fail to see how a Joint Select Committee will be able to give any input into what can be a management issue, and that is the broad point I am making.

Again, at the bottom of that page it speaks to the public health inspectors, the Minister of Health is well aware that there is a dichotomy in terms of two employers for the public health inspectors, and again that will have to be a policy decision to be made by the Government as opposed to a JSC giving input on that matter. If we can move on to pages 15 and 16 of the report, Madam Speaker, with regard to the functioning of the Accident and Emergency Department, and there are many issues here that, again, would be management issues, either for the boards, or for the RHAs, or even for the managing of an Accident and Emergency Department.

So, I am saying that some of these points that I am making is so that we can fine-tune what actually comes to a JSC for better deliberation. Page 17 speaks toward management. There are many issues again which would be management issues that can be dealt with, with the nurse manager or the medical director. One of the issues here would be the relationship of the doctors and nurses in terms of making the ward rounds, and I just make the point that the report is silent on that and perhaps the Minister may want to address that. That is something that needs to be addressed in terms of the relationship between the doctors and nurses making the ward rounds. Page 18 speaks to laboratory, and there are quite a few issues that are noted here.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1), the Member is going into the report, reading directly from the report. He is going “page 18”, or calling pages. The report is not before us, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, 40. Standing Order 40.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, 40? The entirety of Standing Order 40? Is there a particular provision that you are concerned about?

**Mr. Lee:** On the issue of the Motion—

**Madam Speaker:** Please stand!

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. On the issue of the Motion, the Leader of Government Business laid two reports in this House to be debated. For us to carry those reports to a Joint Select Committee the report—and you are asking the House to validate to go to a Joint Select Committee—to rule on that, we are



supposed to be able to at least debate that report or the content of those reports so for us to be able to make a learned decision whether or not we want to send those reports to a Joint Select Committee. [*Desk thumping*] So, I ask some leeway because it cannot be that we can just take those reports to a Joint Select Committee. The Members have to go through those reports, debate the reports, understand whether it [*Desk thumping*] has validity for us to carry it to a Joint Select Committee. [*Continuous desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Having regard to the point that has been made, as I indicated before, the point of the Joint Select Committee—the actual mandate is to review and analyze the report, is to consider the findings and recommendations, it is to report on observations and recommendations. So that I have said, as far as the reports are concerned, we are not here to debate the reports. We are not here to analyze the reports, and I have given to the Member leeway in terms of pointing out certain things in the report to give context. But in terms of going into depth, into observations, recommendations, findings, my ruling is that that is outside the ambit of this debate for the appointment of a Joint Select Committee, [*Interruption*] for that exact purpose, and I so rule. Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I am so guided. Again, Madam Speaker, I am just making that point that for example, and if you would bear with me, if you look at page 18 under laboratory, and I am not talking about details, if you look at the first line, Madam Speaker, it says—[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Speaker:** Could we have some order! Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. If you would just bear with me. If we look at that line it says, in the use of laboratory facilities there must be—I am just thinking of the position of a Member who sits in a Joint Select Committee, is this something that the Parliament has to make—that a Member of Parliament has to make a decision on? Because it speaks to arrangements here which can easily be management issues, and that is the point I am making, but I will move on.

And there are several other issues, Madam Speaker, if we were to peruse this report, and this speaks to radiology issues, and I was really hoping that I will be able to give an input so that when the matter goes to the JSC, and perhaps the Minister could have those suggestions. But be that as it may, Madam Speaker, I will move on. The issue of radiology services is featured here, that has been a big issue. I take it that the Government would not want to hear any suggestions going forward, but I would leave it at that. Just to say with regard to laboratory and radiology, just to throw out the fact that the Government, being a purchaser of

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services on behalf of patients, can also look at perhaps purchasing some these services outside of the public sector, and we can also look at the fact that equipment that lies in the hospitals is not utilized on weekends and these machines are rested at night. So, those were just ideas that I am throwing out.  
[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, and Member that is precisely the point. I think the Joint Select Committee, in fact, it may be that in doing what you are doing, you are really usurping what would be the function of a Joint Select Committee.  
[*Interruption*] Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Tewarie:** “We cyah usurp no authority” in any Joint Select Committee.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Caroni Central, please! Continue, Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I will move on. I will move on quickly. If you would allow me just to look at page 23, and you know what, Madam Speaker, I am going to hold the suggestions. Perhaps I better do that, but also to make a few points for clarification, and perhaps I can seek clarification on this report, because on page 23—page 25, and perhaps there can be an explanation for this if you permit me on the San Fernando General Hospital, and if I may quote from the report:

The new facility is totally outfitted with generous allocation of space.

But the explanation I seek is, it says here:

Was the occupation of the new office complex the best decision?

**Madam Speaker:** Member, it is the same difficulty that you are running into having regard to what you wanted to do. So that I am not going to allow that, I am going to ask you to move on.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was actually going to use that point to point out that perhaps there may be some inaccuracies or incomplete information in the report. That is the point I am making, because there is a perfectly logical explanation for why it is so, because being the chairman of the RHA when that took place—

**Madam Speaker:** Please, move on! Please, move on!

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** But, I will move on, Madam Speaker. There are many other issues that we can look at with regard to the headings, but I take your guidance, Madam Speaker, in terms of where we go.

I just want to, again, crave your indulgence to look at page 47, and to look at that in relation to page 66—pages 47 and 66 which speak to hospitalization, and both pages speak to the Couva Hospital, and on page 47 the committee seems to be going out of its way to pronounce that the paediatric facility is not needed at Couva. Yet, on page 66—

**Madam Speaker:** Member, again, please!

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Madam, I was going to make the point that the report also has some contradictions.

**Madam Speaker:** I heard the point, please continue. Next point.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Because there is one thing on page 44, but on page 66, presents a—

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I have already ruled, please go on. Next point.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think I probably would leave the first report. There are two reports before us, I would leave the first report, but before leaving that report if I could just refer to page 72 with regard to legislative changes and to note that it is very brief that there are no ideas identified.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, your original 30 minutes are up, you are entitled to 15 more minutes, if you so wish.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam.

**Madam Speaker:** You may proceed.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Madam Speaker, I would move on to the second report which speaks to the public sector doctors in private practice, and that is the second report before us for discussion, and again, just to make a few broad comments, if I may.

This is a very important matter, of course, which is why it has been brought to the Parliament, and a JSC is being asked to consider two positions here: One which is signed by two Members, and the other which is signed by the other five Members. I must say that, again, there is no context provided for the discussion. I would have thought that a matter so important would have been brought with a lot more context, a lot more data. So, again, it speaks across in terms of the lack of data. I am just making that point. For example, no information is provided on the current doctor-to-population ratio in the country. What the Government would expect. What the Government desires. There is also no actual data on the numbers of public sector doctors who engage in private practice.

I also believe, Madam Speaker, that there are some other issues that the members of a Joint Select Committee will want in front of them to make a pronouncement on this matter, and that would include an impact assessment on the effects of a new policy change that would impact on the public health sector. [*Desk thumping*] It will also include a cost analysis of what it would cost the Government and by extension, taxpayers, to effect such a policy change. And, you know, Madam Speaker, without supporting any of these two positions, I just want to ask a question on something that the JSC could consider in their deliberations—and really, is it fair to deny patients in the public sector the services of doctors with exceptional skills and training?

**Madam Speaker:** Member, again, the same difficulty that I am having, and that what you are presenting here would be something that the JSC—the wish of the House is to appoint one—would go into and consider. Okay? So, please be guided and move on.

**Dr. L. Bodoë:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do not believe I will be much longer in this circumstances. So, I just wanted to say that whilst we on this side are immensely grateful for the opportunity to view this report and to make an input, I wanted to point out that there are certain shortcomings—[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Speaker:** Members!

**Dr. L. Bodoë:**—that the JSC will have to deal with, and those are being aired in the public domain. I also wanted to make the point that many of the issues in management and policy issues, I would also want to suggest to the Government that if they are to bring this report to a committee, that perhaps the Minister of Health could get his technical staff to re-examine this report to flesh out the issues and bring the real issues before the Parliament to debate.

So, Madam Speaker, as I close, again I want to emphasize and re-emphasize that it is our belief on this side that health care, like crime and indeed other national issues, is too important a matter to play politics with. Indeed, the quality and scope of health care delivery can literally be a matter of life and death, especially for those who cannot afford private health care. Illness and ailments do not cross party lines, as you know, Madam Speaker. So we on this side stand ready, willing and able to assist the Government in implementing any sensible measures that would improve the health of our citizens, even if it means examining this report in its current form as part of a Joint Select Committee.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity, and I thank my colleagues for their attention. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Tim Gopeesingh** (*Caroni East*): [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, the Motion before the House this afternoon is:

“*Be it resolved* that a Joint Select Committee be established to consider...”

So, the first issue is whether we agree as an Opposition whether a Joint Select Committee should be established or not. So whether the Opposition on this side agrees with the Government that we must have a Joint Select Committee. That is the first issue. And this seems to be a Government with an ABC Cabinet that is unable to run the country [*Desk thumping*] and to be able to implement any policy, whether they have a policy or not, so they want help from the Opposition now to tell them how to run the health sector. [*Desk thumping*] They had a manifesto. They had a manifesto 2000. The manifesto is big and broad here. And a lot of things they said in the health sector, why have they not implemented that? Why have they now come to ask for a Joint Select Committee for us to tell them how to run the health sector? [*Desk thumping*] We are willing to do that. If you want that, vacate office, call an election and we will run the health sector. [*Desk thumping*] We will run the health sector which we did remarkably well in five years.

**Hon. Member:** What?

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Remarkably well in five years.

**Hon. Member:** “Nah, nah, nah.” [*Laughter*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order!

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** So, the Government wants us to help them with a Joint Select Committee to engage in discussions at a Joint Select Committee, and makes us believe that they will take our recommendations when we go there? So, therefore if we go and we give them our points and ideas, which they are bereft of ideas, so they need our input to tell them what they should be doing, which they are not doing.

So, the question is, do they want us to give them ideas, be with them, and when they cannot run the health sector, and the health sector continues to fail, they will blame the Opposition, because the Opposition participated [*Continuous desk thumping*] in that Joint Select Committee. So, therefore, the idea is that the Opposition gave, were not good ideas and that is why the Joint Select Committee had been failing.

So, the first question we have to answer, whether we agree with the Joint Select Committee to be established or not? And to consider the first report of the Committee established to review the levels of health care delivery by the regional health authorities. Madam Speaker, in 1937 there was a Moyne report; in 1955

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there was a Julien report; in 2006 there was a Gladys Gafoor report on the health sector. And there were three volumes under the Gladys Gafoor Commission of Enquiry into the—and all the recommendations for running the health sector were incorporated in the Gladys Gafoor Commission of Enquiry. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, you had Volume I, II and III. Volume I with the executive summary and findings of the Gafoor Commission of Enquiry produced voluminous recommendations and findings. What is different in this report from the Gladys Gafoor? This is an inferior report to the Gladys Gafoor Commission of Enquiry report. [*Desk thumping*] I know some of the players on this who provided this report, Dr. Welch had been my contemporary from since 1969. He was the Chief Medical Officer of Port of Spain General Hospital for a number of years, and Port of Spain General Hospital continues to deteriorate under his watch [*Desk thumping*] when 23 doctors left the health service.

So, what can he come and tell us now in this report that will make us want to join in with the Government to analyze this report? There is nothing to be analyzed. All these things have been said already in the Gafoor Commission of Enquiry, many of which the People's Partnership Government implemented. [*Desk thumping*] We could not implement everything in five years, but we did significant work in that and we implemented a significant amount of areas, and the hon. Minister of Health, if he were here he would tell you what the implementation was and so on. He would go into more detail.

So, review the levels of health care delivery by the regional health authorities and to rationalize the system of public sector doctors in private practice. You have two reports: one report was laid in the House on November 09, 2016. How long ago was that? December, January, February, March, April, May, six months ago. So you now come six months later and you want to form a Joint Select Committee and to end it by June the 5<sup>th</sup>. [*Desk thumping*] So, a Joint Select Committee to be appointed, and five days' time we must finish. [*Desk thumping*] Five days to finish the work; today is the 31<sup>st</sup> of May. [*Crosstalk*] [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order! Order!

**3.30 p.m.**

That is in the Motion! [*Crosstalk and Interruption*] The Motion says, the second part:

“*Be it further resolved* that this Committee be mandated to:

(a) review and analyze the Reports;

- (b) consider the findings and recommendations contained in the Reports; and
  - (c) report its observations and recommendations no later than June 5, 2017.”
- [*Crosstalk*]

That is five days from now. [*Crosstalk*] But did you make an amendment to the report? Did you make an amendment?

**Hon. Member:** Well, we were going to make it.

**Dr. Moonilal:** “When she go make it, next year?”

**Madam Speaker:** I would like to hear the Member for Caroni East. And I ask all Members to comply with Standing Order 53. Member, please continue.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Madam Speaker, I want to know when did the Leader of Government Business amend this and what date? As I have it here, that I got, it says June the 5<sup>th</sup>. Could you tell us when? [*Interruption*] What Standing Order it is on?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Could you give way? I am asking you to give way. [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** No, no, no. I am not giving way. I am not giving way. You will have your time to answer. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Speaker:** Members. We all are quite aware of how one interjects. If the Member is not willing to give way, he is within his right, and therefore please proceed. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Madam Speaker, this is a policy document of the Government. Policy documents are set by the Government and they implement their policies. [*Desk thumping*] You want us to tell you what policy? And I will just draw an analogy. There are two significant Members on the other side, Madam Speaker. When we were debating—when we had the procurement piece of legislation, which the hon. Prime Minister said that she would have laid in the first 28 days—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** She did.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:**—and which she did [*Desk thumping*] and we had deliberations after a year, for a year, and we were moving purposefully. And that procurement piece of legislation would have been finished long time ago, but two of the Members on that side, now in Government, who were in Opposition then, including the Prime Minister and including the now Acting Prime Minister, put us

into a corner and said, “You have to come with a policy. Tell us what your policy is on procurement.” And they stymied the work of the procurement process for two years until their people told them they must get back and finish the work of the procurement.

So the point I am making; they asked us for a policy, we had to give them a policy. You have a policy now, “doh” ask us to join and support you in your policy. [*Desk thumping*] Your policy is fraudulent here. This is a fraudulent policy on the health sector. [*Desk thumping*] It has no meat and it has no substance.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I ask you to use another word. Okay. I am sure you can.

**Dr. Moonilal:** “Dotishness.”

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Madam Speaker, this policy has no depth; it has no ability to implement anything. It is just words, management jargon that you have to look deep into it to see what it is saying. And all of it is a repetition, whether they copied from the Gladys Gafoor Commission of Enquiry, they did not copy it properly. They did not copy it properly and they bring a report for us to look at.

Now let me give you some more examples. I have the report here, Report 1 and Report 2. So Report 1 was laid six months ago and you are now coming to rush us to form a joint select committee to debate that. And five days you are asking us to form the Joint Select Committee, meet on it. We must be working miracles. Yeah. You want us to go in there and say we agree with you in everything and then get out of the committee and make a recommendation. No, it does not work like that. And when my colleague said that we must analyze the report and debate the report today, we should debate the report and then we will determine whether we are in agreement with it or not, to go to a Joint Select Committee. [*Desk thumping*] And as I stand here now, Madam Speaker, I do not see anything in these two reports that will merit us going to a joint select committee. [*Desk thumping*] And hear what this report says, Madam Speaker:

“Committee to Review—this is August 29<sup>th</sup>”—Report 1.

Madam Speaker, I read this from page to page and from word to word. You know my life has been medicine so I am very much interested in this report. One of the persons who was on this committee was my student. [*Laughter*] Dr. Adesh Sirjusingh worked with me for about three or four years. He is now a gynaecologist of whom I am proud. [*Desk thumping*] There is another member who is in another setting, from another university abroad, who does not



understand the culture and what we have to deal with in the health care system of Trinidad, but sits on a committee to make recommendations to us, not knowing where we are, what we have done, where we want to go.

**Dr. Moonilal:** And he wants us to go to a joint select committee.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And he want us to go to a joint select committee. So these are three members. There are two or three other members, I would not want to make any comment on it. But there are members on this committee talking about public sector and private sector practice, whether doctors are working with private sector and public sector. There are two members on this committee who did a whole law degree and did their LLB while they were in the hospital—doctors at hospital. They registered as full time students who did their law degree, “dey” LLB and “dey” LEC and Hugh Wooding which is full time while they were senior doctors of the hospital and they coming to tell us today that we must go on a joint select committee. How hypocritical. [*Desk thumping*]

Two of the members, full time, law degree—LLB, LEC. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Were they on leave or vacation?

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** No leave, no vacation, working in the hospital and they are telling us—so at first glance, Madam Speaker, this is offensive to us. [*Desk thumping*] How can you tell us—one is my student, one does not know what Trinidad health care system is, one is my contemporary and he did very well. I will respect my colleague, Dr. Welch. But poor thing, he does not know about management of health sector. [*Desk thumping*] He does not know anything about—[*Crosstalk*]

Listen, Madam Speaker, this is not to boast, eh. I worked in 17 hospitals around the world. [*Desk thumping*] I worked on four continents of the world. I worked three hospitals in England, five in Canada, [*Desk thumping*] three in—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** They want you on a joint select committee?

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I went to John Hopkins University. I went to four universities: John Hopkins, University of London, University of Toronto and University of the West Indies. So I can tell you what they have written here does not deserve any attention whatsoever. And for us to go in a joint select committee and waste our time with that, that is something that we have to consider. [*Desk thumping*]

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The country is in tatters as far as the health sector is concerned, as far as the economy, and as far as the education sector is concerned. They are making a mess around. So they are trying to find an excuse now to say, well, you know, we need “all yuh”. [*Desk thumping*] You do not need our support to continue to make a mess of what you are doing at the moment.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Do it by yourself. Make your mess by yourself.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Executive summary, Madam Speaker. We have to look to see what it is that we need a joint select committee for. This is the Executive Summary, I am not going into the detail. The first thing, let me just mention:

“In concluding the segment, reference is made to a number of incomplete or proposed encounters with professional bodies, representative bodies and NGOs. Mention is made of some of the issues initiated and the need for further attention.”

That is telling you the work of this committee is incomplete. They are telling you:

“...reference is made to a number of incomplete or proposed encounters with professional bodies, representative bodies and NGOs.”

So who did they consult with? When the work is so incomplete and you go to a JSC you have to call all these people now—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Ramadhar:** Again.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Not again, they did not call them in the first place. So, how long is that going to take? You have the Medical Protection Society, you have the Trinidad and Tobago Medical Association, you have the Medical Board, you have the Doctors Association. Have these been consulted? I see no evidence of that. They want to legislate or go to a joint select committee on the issue of private sector/public sector, whether the doctor should be working in both and so on. But the best people to talk to are the specialists in the country and hear what they have to say, and there are over 200 specialists in the country. Did they bring them together to find out what their thinking is on it?

**Dr. Moonilal:** And you want to go to a joint select committee.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And you want to go to a joint—so the preliminary work of this report has not been done. It is a lot of more work that has to be done. So the report has no foundation on it. [*Desk thumping*] And they say this represents—the report on Part B remains outstanding. So you do a report, you finish it in—you lay it in Parliament November 9<sup>th</sup>. You have a next report to do, you lay it on March 24<sup>th</sup>. And here, the question now, doctors in private/public sector practice.

Listen, I would not get myself involved in that, because I was a university associate professor and I gave honorary consultancy to the hospital and worked in the hospital, harder than most of the doctors [*Desk thumping*] working in the public sector. We were honorary consultants as university professors and lecturers. And there were days when Prof. Roopnarine, God bless his soul, and myself, will be in an operating theatre on a Tuesday and we would do 17 operations from 7.30 in the morning to 2.30 in the afternoon, using two operating theatres; three hysterectomies, four caesarean section, and smaller cases. And the doctors worked very hard as a matter of management, Madam Speaker, as a matter of implementation of programmes and effective management.

**Dr. Moonilal:** And a joint select committee cannot do that.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** A Joint Select Committee cannot help us with that. If you have a hon. Minister of Health who is not respected by the medical profession, [*Desk thumping*] how can you get the system going? That is the first basic issue and if you do not have people at the Ministry of Health, at the administrative level—this is one of the pillars that is spoken about in this report. And if you do not have the—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member, just remember we are not going into the report, eh.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** No, no, no.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay, good.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I am not going into it. There are eight pillars on this and the eight pillars have spoken for themselves. The eight pillars that they speak about in this report are on the Gladys Gafoor Report. And so if they go and they take their time and the pain to look at that and examine the recommendations for that, they will see that there is no need for any Joint Select Committee. So, really, what is the motive of coming here? Is this the first policy that you want us to give you any help on? We gave you assistance in the FATCA legislation. So when it comes to legislation, and this involves lives of citizens, but the laws relating to the country, this is where we come in, and we go to the Joint Select Committees, but not for policy. The people voted for you, you betrayed the people, you gave untruths to the people.

**Hon. Member:** What!

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Yeah. The people felt that they were lied to, they felt that they were in deceit and here it is you are now coming to tell us—20 months have gone—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Madam Speaker, 48(6).

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Caroni East, just in terms of the word you just used, you had used a word before that was acceptable and you can continue in the vein of what you know is parliamentary.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I will move on, Madam Speaker. If I offended anybody, I withdraw that offence. We move on. I do not know.

You had a manifesto on health and I have it here and I looked at it as well, 2015, “Let’s do this together”, PNM manifesto. And I really looked to see if there was anything tangible and how it is different, how this report is different from their manifesto. They also had their 2020 vision on health. That was superfluous. It had no depth as well, management jargon that you could copy from any type of report internationally on health and so on and put together, but nothing tangible to implement. Nothing tangible. And so why are you not using your 2015 PNM manifesto to help guide you in your implementation of health sector and health sector reform?

Why you are not using the information on the 2020 visioning, or the new 2030 visioning? You have not been able to explain that to us. And the Leader of Government Business was trivial in her approach to this piece of, to this Motion, [*Desk thumping*] just saying a few words. She said the Joint Select Committee to give an overview and to examine works of the Government. Well, we do not need to go to any joint select committee to examine your work. Your work has failed. [*Desk thumping*] The work of your Government has failed in the health sector and the Joint Select Committee to look at the two reports. Well, we are looking at it, “but we eh see no merit in it”. We looked at it. [*Desk thumping*] Ensure Parliament participate in the process.

So you want us to participate in this. That makes no sense whatsoever. It has nothing in it and everything is a regurgitation of the past. Some may be in your manifesto, some on the 2020 vision, some on the 2030 vision and this Gladys Gafoor Commission of Enquiry, 1,500 pages, three volumes and that had recurring problems from previous reports. And this Gladys Gafoor Commission of Enquiry Report mandated by the last Prime Minister, Mr. Manning, when his Government found themselves in difficulty in the health sector and there were serious issues and he was forced to call a commission of enquiry in 2004, they completed the work in 2006 and God bless that commission of enquiry, they did tremendous work. And they made a number of recommendations, summary of findings on page 25, recommendations on page 31 and ended up with seven pages

of recommendations and observations on the report of the Vision 2020 subcommittee that also took into consideration the Vision 2020. And critical recommendations from the report of the Commission of Enquiry, new initiatives.

So, Madam Speaker, I highlighted all the areas here in this report and I see it repeated in the Welch Report. Primary health care. They spoke about primary health care, everybody. Our manifesto had primary health care as well. This report has primary health care as well. But it is not a matter of writing about it, it is a matter of doing it. So you want to play a big emphasis on primary health care. Our honourable Prime Minister, two years before we ended ours, said, "Members of Cabinet, what can we do to improve the health sector?" And ideas came flowing. And the first idea that came, which we were doing already, was let us try to move faster with implementation of programmes in the primary health care system. And you know what we did, there are 105 health centres in Trinidad and Tobago, 10 district health facilities, 10 hospitals and 10 private nursing homes. I know it, I lived it. I was chairman of two regional health authorities between 1997 to 2000. [*Desk thumping*] When I did such a good job in the first North West Regional Health Authority in 1997 to 1999, [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Panday asked me to take on the Central Regional Health Authority. And we did a good job, we did a fantastic job. Just give me permission for one thing. The intensive care unit at Port of Spain which has saved hundreds of lives so far, was built in 1999. [*Desk thumping*] A new mortuary, a new X-ray department, a new pharmacy, a new waiting area and so on, plenty work and I am talking about work in 1995 to 2000 and surpassed in 2010 to 2015. [*Desk thumping*]

So primary health care. Out of the 105 health centres, we opened up 65, up to nine o'clock in the night and on weekends, 65. And we provided doctors, nurses, attendants, and in some cases, pharmacists and lab attendants and we had the ambulance service; 65. So when you want to control diabetes and hypertension, the people coming from work in the evening will now go in and get their attention rather than having to take time. You know what has happened, they are talking about primary health care and this report is telling them as a priority, primary health care must be there. But they closed down a number of these health centres already, a number of these 65 health centres have been closed down. They are not extending beyond four o'clock in the evening.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, remember this is not the debate about the health sector. I understood your point and therefore keep what you are saying to the point which you raised please.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** So I was drawing the analogy in their report on primary health care and what we did and what they should be doing rather than trying to ask us to come to a joint select committee to tell them that they should be doing what they should be doing which we did already. [*Desk thumping*] That point is made clear, Madam Speaker?

The secondary and tertiary institutions they spoke about. The secondary and tertiary institutions: the hospitals, accident and emergency, ward management, lab, I am reading from the Welch Report. These are the summaries. Radiology, pharmaceuticals, bed management, surgery, operating theatre, obstetric clinics. All these things revolve around the issue of management and competence and supervision. You could write anything you want to write about the health sector, we should do this and we should do that, but if you do not have the right people on board to supervise it and manage it, everything will fail, everything will fail.

So they have made these recommendations here in the report but it is really a matter for implementation and management and they do not seem to have the capacity to do that, because they might. I do not want to cast any aspersion on any board, but Dr. Rambachan, the Member for Tabaquite, and some of my colleagues who were in the last administration, when we sat to give some assistance to our Minister of Health, and we said that management is the important thing, which this report has not even been touched. Well, they refer to it a bit. We had a CEO for the North West Regional Health Authority who used to walk the floor probably once every two weeks and we had boards who do not even go into the hospitals. So you could write anything here on your report, but the issue is getting the things done by getting people to work and work well and meaningful. [*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member for Caroni East, your original 30 minutes have expired. You are entitled to 15 more minutes if you wish as extended time.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** You may proceed.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** [*Desk thumping*] So, secondary and tertiary institutions. We built a number of additional secondary and tertiary institutions. We expanded the Teaching Hospital at the Chancery Lane and that was to help in the university getting there, using it for teaching and of course to prevent the overload from San Fernando hospital and to have better clinics and so on. So when this Welch Report tells us now, improving secondary and tertiary institutions. The Point Fortin hospital is going on now. I hope that they continue it because for almost,

2000, under PNM they had been asking for a Point Fortin hospital. They take a People's Partnership Government to start the Point Fortin hospital. [*Desk thumping*] They have been talking for Arima hospital for a long time. It is the People's Partnership Government started the Arima hospital. [*Desk thumping*]

Well, it is sad for me to say because I did a lot of my undergraduate training and up to 1978, I worked at Port of Spain hospital, '74 to '78 and the block at Port of Spain hospital, the scientific reports have shown that there are problems there. We recognized that as the People's Partnership and the hon. Prime Minister with the Member responsible for UDeCOTT did an assessment of Port of Spain hospital, structural and made a recommendation that we will have to build a new hospital system in Port of Spain called the Port of Spain hospital medical complex in Port of Spain. [*Desk thumping*] And UDeCOTT was beginning to move that way. So 20 months have passed, you "ain" do a thing in the health sector yet, everything is getting worse. No medicine, no oncology drugs, no CDAP drugs, they cannot get things for surgical practice to do the things for surgery. So how could a joint select committee help that, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker, I am sure you are getting the point that these things are essential ingredients in the successful management of any health care system. So secondary and tertiary institutions, I have dealt superficially with it. Build more hospitals. We did that. So Arima has now, Sangre Grande has been renovated, the Mayaro District Health Facility has been improved, Point Fortin hospital is going on, the Chancery Lane Complex and more important, the Couva District Hospital.

The Couva District Hospital is laid to waste. The overcrowding at San Fernando can be taken care of there. You want to—the Government said that they will have a public sector/private sector partnership from since they came in. Twenty months have passed, have we got any idea of what is happening with this public sector/private sector partnership for the Couva Hospital? When, already they would determine that certain phases will go through gradually and the complex will be utilized. By the time they get their public sector/private sector thing going, five years would have passed—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** And they are out.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And they are out of Government and the hospital laid to waste just like the Biche High School which was closed down for about 10 years, which like the schools in south, Parvati and Shiva Boys and so on, which are now being closed and are not being continued, whether in spite or vindictiveness, I do not know. So services delivery, ward management, that is—you do not need a

Joint Select Committee to tell you about ward management. You do not need a joint select committee to tell you about running a laboratory. The people in San Fernando hospital now, when they have to have their laboratory investigations done, they have to take it out privately. To have it done privately, then brought back to the hospital, that could cost patient lives while they are waiting on investigative lab reports.

So where would a joint select committee tell them how to improve their lab? Radiology: four CT scanners going down one time, MRI breaking up. Member for Chaguanas East, you remember MRI, four CT scanners down? You need a joint select committee to tell you that you should be managing your CT equipment [*Desk thumping*] properly and having them serviced with a biomedical team around all the hospitals. And so that the biomedical team could ensure that these things do not break down. Pharmaceutical: we tired nauseating, C40 and hon. Minister with the protocols and C40 and the procurement of drugs and all of that. Pure old talk and he cannot even identify which of the CDAP drugs that he said were inefficacious; went through a 10-minute thing in Parliament here, the country still do not know. So when you come with a report here and you talked about pharmaceuticals, where is that helping you?

**4.00 p.m.**

Bed Management: We have a hospital ready to help you with the bed management. You do not need a joint select committee to tell you about bed management. [*Desk thumping*] Surgery, Operating Theatres: Get the operating theatres fixed. Get your system working. Why is there in San Fernando Hospital they can do 7,500 operations in one year and Port of Spain Hospital you do 2,500? Three times better in San Fernando Hospital than Port of Spain. It is the culture. So where are you going to change that? This report will tell us? A joint select committee will tell us what the culture is? You have to get the people working. [*Desk thumping*]

So a Port of Spain Hospital operating theatre is supposed to start at 7.30 and finish three o'clock in the afternoon. The nurses' shift end. By the time 1.30, and a case that might take two or three hours is about to go on, they say, "No, do not start that case because my shift finishing at three o'clock."

**Mr. Ramadhar:** "Doh say dat."

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** So, therefore, you do two cases, your changeover time from one surgical case to another is an hour. At Mount Hope, our changeover time used to be 10/15 minutes. You move from one theatre to another, back and forth. And even privately it is done very quickly. So you "doh" need a joint select committee to tell you how to run your operating theatres.



Pillar 2, Infrastructure: I spoke about that: Port of Spain General Hospital, St. James, St. Ann's, Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, San Fernando General Hospital, Sangre Grande and Scarborough. It took us, after the Scarborough Hospital was earmarked in 2000 to cost \$120 million, under the PNM it ended up costing over \$780 million. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Members:** Whooooo!

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And the People's Partnership Government had to complete the Scarborough Hospital. They did not have the capacity and the capability to complete it.

**Dr. Moonilal:** "Dah is where gravel and sand walk away?"

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Pillar 3, Madam Speaker, the vertical services. Oh God, that is supposed to be run from the Ministry of Health as a vertical service with the competency that is needed. Chemistry, Food and Drugs: how many pharmaceuticals or things come into this country and the Food and Drug Division is not working properly? What have you done about it? You are in charge now. You are in Government. Do not look for us to help you. You have to do it.

The National Blood Transfusion Service: Three people got HIV Positive because of the inefficiency and the incompetency at the National Blood Transfusion Service. Thoracic Medical: The Thoracic Medical, that is at Caura Hospital. What has been happening at Caura Hospital? No improvement. So people needing chest surgery, lung surgery for all these cancers of the lungs and so on, no improvement. But we did a lot of work at Caura Hospital. So we need the work to go on. We "doh" need a joint select committee to tell you that you need to do what you have to do.

The Dental Services: That is a vertical service. Let the regional health authorities, each one of them, deal with the dental cases just like the medical and the surgical and the obstetrics, and so on. The Trinidad and Tobago Public Health Lab: That is doing a formidable job and Dr. Hospedales ought to be sincerely congratulated and complimented [*Desk thumping*] for the work he has been doing.

The Queen's Park Counselling Clinic: I think Prof. Bartholomew is in charge of that and he is helping a lot of HIV patients, and so on, in their management. That was my former teacher. He and Prof. Beaubrun—and Prof. Bartholomew—and Prof. Butler were the first generations that came to Trinidad to help open the medical school, and we are the second generation.

So, Nutrition and Metabolism: Where is that? Extinct. “Yuh doh” hear any advice on nutrition. Population Programme: the family planning services, in the district health facilities they have no assistance in terms of what you can give them in the family planning programme.

Insect Vector Control: Man, the Zika virus is flourishing in Trinidad, and everything is happening. Patients who are pregnant—17,000 patients are fearful of Zika, and the Insect Vector Control is sitting down and not spraying the country. [*Desk thumping*] When you ask what is happening, nothing is happening. Would this report help us? Would this joint select Committee help us? No, Madam Speaker.

Health Education Division: You should be blasting the airwaves, do not—on your diet, for diabetics and hypertensive patients, prevent obesity; a proper lifestyle. And so as you flash the screen: A pap smear in terms of prevention; a mammogram in terms of prevention; a colonoscopy in terms of prevention; a prostate specific antigen—PSA—in terms of prevention for [*Desk thumping*] cancer of the prostate. All these things should be at the forefront. Yeah, at the forefront.

Madam Speaker, it pains me to have to read this thing. And then “they talking ’bout” training. They close down GATE—almost close it down. Minister Karim worked hard—the Member for Chaguanas East worked tirelessly and long hours to make sure that that Tunapuna, the nursing teaching institution came a—

**Hon. Member:** El Dorado.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** El Dorado. [*Desk thumping*] And we were training there 500 nurses per year. Where has that gone now? Closed down?

**Hon. Member:** It is still there.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Yeah. Closed down. So, Madam Speaker, what about the personnel, doctors and nurses? We are short of nurses. Keep on the training. Even though you train nurses to go abroad, that is all right. “Doh” close it down. “Doh” train less nurses. We have 180 doctors in the country waiting for jobs and cannot get jobs. A lot of them were on scholarships and they want to make sure that their scholarships are—they pay back for their scholarship by serving for a period of time, and they are not given the opportunity; 180 of them are waiting for jobs.

**Hon. Member:** Specialists too.

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** And specialists waiting as well. Man, you would grab on to a specialist because the doctors that have been trained in Trinidad and Tobago at the University of the West Indies Medical School are second to none in the world. [*Desk thumping*]. We are the best. Any part of the world they go to, you will find

them leading. They are in charge of the hospital. They are professors internationally. One of the guys I trained who worked with me for years, he is now Professor at the University. They are having their medical examinations today—Prof. Bassaw.

So Pillar 4, RHA Executive Administration: Get the administration to work. Pillar 5, Chief Medical Officer: What is the Chief Medical Officer doing? Pillar 6, Ministry of Health, Administration: What the Minister of Health will do, or has been doing to make sure that the RHA chairmen are working, the Chief Medical Officer is working and the Ministry of Health, Administration is working?

So that, in summary, are the pillars of this report—Report 1—and the private practice issue with consultant doctors is Report 2. Madam Speaker, on analysis of this, we see no justification for us going into a joint select committee. But if we are forced to—which I doubt that they will want to force us—we will give them words of advice and we will give them pearls to the swine. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Members:** Ohhhh!

**Hon. Member:** “Who you calling swine?”

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** I take that back. Minister, I take that back.

**Hon. Member:** And why you offended by that?

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** So there is a lot of work to be done in the health sector. Patients’ lives are very honourable to all of us and we will continue to work assiduously to make sure that the lives of every citizen, every child, becomes better and we do not lose lives as a result of incompetence. So, Madam Speaker, the debate on that, as far as we are going with a Joint Select Committee or not, is something that we have to carefully think about. And the June the 5<sup>th</sup> date is unrealistic and they have to come with an amendment to bring this.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

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

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*): Thank you so much. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, I join the debate on this Motion, but first, really, I should congratulate, on behalf of all Members, the professorial analysis that came before me from the Member for Caroni East, [*Desk thumping*] and the very careful thoughts of the Member for Fyzabad on this matter, so I become now the

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third doctor to speak on this Motion. [*Desk thumping*] But, Madam Speaker, not being a medical doctor, I assure you that I will not be able to go into the details of the reports before us even if I was permitted to do so. I also will suffer in comparison to the Member for Caroni East if I attempt to get into any detail of the health sector.

But, my purpose, really, is to share a few points on the Motion and to speak on the purpose of the Motion, the intention of the Government to pursue a joint select committee for this specific purpose and to advise, really, on what other avenues may be available to the Government to discuss, redraft policy and effectively implement policy. So I will focus not on the contents of the report per se, but really on the governance issue of executing policy to project, and implementing. Because I understand from the mover of the Motion, that was the intention.

You see, Madam Speaker, there is also another issue I will come to later as to the establishment of a joint select committee; what is required for that in terms of resources, time, money, et cetera. Now, it has been the experience of all governments, not only this Government, that you go through processes where various Ministries will advise of the establishment of a committee—a specialized technical committee—to focus on specific areas of public policy. So you may have reports, as we always do, on crime, on health, on sports, on housing, et cetera. When those reports are done, by definition they ought to be submitted to Cabinet and Cabinet will look at the reports and Cabinet will either agree or note the contents of a report. I assume these reports have gone to Cabinet and the Cabinet would have noted the contents, or agreed as the case may be. It may have been a better approach for the Government to establish an implementation committee—

**Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—to implement the findings of the report, [*Desk thumping*] if you believe those findings merit implementation—

**Dr. Rambachan:** And advance the process.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—and advance the process. The Member for Caroni East was at pains—he was at pains—to point out that there may not even be merit in the report that would validate going to a joint select committee. A joint select committee is a very important institution of the Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] It is not something to be taken for granted. It is not something you come at a whim

and fancy. And, you know, this very Government spent six months—we had to take them kicking and screaming to a Joint Select Committee of FATCA, [*Desk thumping*] which was a Bill. There is no Bill here. Let me hold it lower. There is no Bill. There is no draft legislative measure to deal with health.

So that when you get a report like this, if you believe as a Cabinet and as a Government, it merits implementation—there is something there—establish a committee. You may choose to put Ministers and persons who are not Ministers, who are operational people, and implement your policies. What is the purpose of going to a joint select committee on policy documents like this? I mean, again, I do not want to go into detail about all these business: secondary, tertiary and so on, but you cannot be inviting the Opposition to join you at the level of a joint select committee on matters that the Cabinet must deal with. The Executive has a responsibility to approve policy. [*Desk thumping*] And this Government is now on a track—they are on a track of closing down the state enterprise; they are shutting down the Government and subcontracting out the work.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** They are subcontracting the work of the Government. If you cannot do the job, get out of town. Get out of town if you cannot do the job. There are others on this side ready, waiting, able, to manage the affairs of the Government, [*Desk thumping*] the Ministry of Health and others.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Competence resides here.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** The competence resides here. So you cannot say that you have two documents—and, again, the Member for Caroni East went, you know, to speak about the people who wrote it, about the general contents of it, and we are getting the impression that it is weak.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Very weak. It is.

**Hon. Member:** Devoid of substance.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** So that if it is devoid of substance, what are you telling a joint select committee to do? May I remind the very Government, there is another institution in the Parliament that—a committee that deals with reports on state enterprise and special purpose companies and so on, and deals with health. [*Desk thumping*] There is a standing committee of the Parliament that deals with health—matters pertaining to health.

This report, if you believe is a great report and good work and so on, it could go to a committee that already exists. Let them review this report—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** There is already a joint select committee.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** What?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** The same one.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Yes. And that is a standing committee which is already composed of all the constituent groups of the Parliament—a joint select committee.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And the RHAs come under that.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And the RHAs come there. Health reports go there, just for education as well. I imagine that EFCL matter should be before the Parliament as well.

**Mr. Karim:** “It coming Monday.”

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** “It coming Monday?” So that on Monday we have a classic example, the Member for Chaguanas East is now pointing out. On Monday a joint select committee will meet to deal with education and a critical report on the corruption at EFCL. They are giving out food and contract on the same second floor.

So the same committee that deals with health can meet, refer their report. So I advise the Government, you can refer the report to the existing standing joint select committee that deals with health and they can call in people, interview, find Dr. Welch, and Dr. “Whoever”, and deal with the matter. So where you have an instrument already available to the Government, why do you want to replicate? Why do you want to go over and over and create another joint select committee? Madam Speaker, I lost count, but I think we have about—how much joint select committees?

**Hon. Member:** Seventeen.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I think we have 17 joint select committees in this Parliament operating at the same time. How much more Members will do? When you put a joint select committee in operation, it is the resources of the Parliament; it is the work of Members, including Government Ministers. So you take Government Ministers. I imagine the Ministry of Health may find himself on a joint select committee like this. You take him away from managing the very health sector to go and spend hours in a joint select committee to examine a weak report, without merit and without substance, we are told. The Minister of Health has to spend hours away from his desk. The Minister of something else has to spend hours away from his or her desk.

**Hon. Member:** The staff.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** The staff of the Parliament has to be engaged. You have to pay for services. Suppose the joint select committee decides that we need some technical independent advice on matters? Because these persons here who wrote this, according to the Member for Caroni East and the Member for Fyzabad, are persons who are connected to the public sector health system. Suppose the joint select committee decided, we need technical competence that is independent from this to understand these issues? You have to pay, and that does not come easy. It “doh” come cheap. So you have—

**Hon. Members:** And not timely.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And not timely. So you are going to waste time—enormous time, parliamentary time. We had an example earlier today. You already have a committee that is there, established by the Standing Orders for the purpose of examining health reports and the health sector. [*Desk thumping*] You come with this next one to put a next committee now. How is this Government operating? Today, we had a scandalous example where the Parliament had to be suspended, almost embarrassingly, while the Government got their act together [*Desk thumping*] and this is another case of wasting parliamentary time, the time of critical Ministers who should be managing the sector, to come in a talk-shop to discuss a weak report.

So you have the avenue for the joint select committee which was already established. Okay, if the Government wants now to hear the views of the Opposition on this report—because they do not want to hear the views of the Opposition on the report eh, at least not in this Parliament here, because this is why the Motion is so worded. The Motion reads:

“*Be it resolved* that a Joint Select Committee be established...”

And when that is “interpreted”—

**Dr. T. Gopeesingh:** Interpreted.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—interpreted by the Speaker—your good self, Ma’am—correctly, when the interpretation comes, it is to establish a joint select committee. So, clearly, by the very wording and the conduct of Members opposite, they are not interested in hearing Members [*Desk thumping*] of the Opposition speak on the health sector. They are not. All you had to do is what previous governments have done before. I remember former Prime Minister, Mr. Patrick Manning, had

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this, you know, interest in laying reports. All you do is create a government Motion that the House debate the two reports of these health committees, so that you can get policy advice; you can get recommendations.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Ideas.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** The very people who you do not want to hear now—you are saying, “We doh want to hear you today, but go in a room somewhere on the sixth floor, we will hear you there.” [*Desk thumping*] That is what you are saying, and spend more money at a time when money is in short supply, they say.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** They say.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** They are telling us money is in short supply, cut to suit. Is that the term? And people are cutting to suit. It is just some are bigger than others. You know, if you big, well, then you cut a bigger piece of cloth. So when we are squandering money with roaming and with romping and with other things, you want to go and squander more money, spend more money on an exercise that will take time.

Now, look at the next problem we have. Unless I am mistaken—I stepped out of the Chamber only for a minute or two—the Member for Arouca/Maloney acknowledged, but did not tell us—unless I am mistaken—any new proposal on the time:

“...report its observations and recommendations no later than June 5, 2017.”

Now, we have no other time so we have to go by what we have on the Motion.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Debating what is here.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** So I am debating what is before me. I cannot debate, you know, what—I cannot dream of what the Government is thinking.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** A seer man.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I do not have that power to dream up what they are thinking, where they are going. So I am debating what is given to me, and what is given to me is June 5<sup>th</sup>. What, you want to establish a joint select committee today, May 31<sup>st</sup>, to report June 5<sup>th</sup>?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Five days.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** They tried that with the FATCA, I think, you know. It cannot. So I would have assumed that the person moving this Motion, the very first thing they would have done is say, “Look, given where we are now, June 5<sup>th</sup>



is out of the question. We are talking July.” But, Madam Speaker, by Standing Orders, the session of the Parliament comes to an end on or about the second week of July. So you are coming to establish a joint select committee when the session—the Second Session of the Eleventh Parliament, I believe—is it? Yes—when the Second Session of the Eleventh Parliament comes to an end in a few days.

What purpose is this? By the time you call and appoint chairman and a quorum and any other business, “session gone”. And putting it here is going to waste parliamentary time of all, including the critical Ministers. You could have simply come with a Government Motion and say, “Let us debate the contents of the report”, and you get all your views. You could have done that. You could have sent the report to the Joint Select Committee that is established dealing with health.

But, you know, I believe there is something more—[*Interruption*—well, I “doh” want to use that word, “sinister”. But there is something deeper and a motive that is different. Because, like crime, this is a critical sector and it may well be, Madam Speaker, that it is the intention of the Government to engage in talk shop so that they can postpone action; postpone programme; postpone project and postpone implementation by telling the population, “We do not have results in the health sector yet, but Parliament is looking at it. And we waiting on the Opposition.” This is a blame on the Opposition. [*Desk thumping*] They want to blame the Opposition again. They blame us for everything. I think tomorrow they may blame us for the gas find, I think. They may blame us for that too, for the gas find by tomorrow. We hope so.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** We will take that blame because—

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Yeah. We will take credit. Anything announced tomorrow, [*Desk thumping*] it is the responsibility of the People’s Partnership. We put that in place, the fiscal regime, the incentive arrangements and so on. If we have good news tomorrow, it is the People’s Partnership. It was a government led by the Member for Siparia that took that action. [*Desk thumping*] But they would not blame us tomorrow, I am sure. They will blame us today.

But you put this to a Parliament. Parliament goes on recess by Standing Order, July and August. When we get back in September we have a budget. We expect the budget. When is this joint select committee meeting? The budget will come mid/end of September. There is a long—that budget is an intensive process, might I remind you. The Standing Orders were amended. When you finish a debate in the budget, then you go into this long process where the entire public service lines

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up outside the doors here to come for scrutiny, for accountability, as we examine the books. That process finishes in October. In October you go to the other place. It is the same parliamentary staff required. You go for an intensive debate in the other place, “October finish”. You know what you are telling us today? Help you to establish a joint select committee so that by November they could meet and conduct the business of this joint select committee in November.

This is trying to fool the population, to hoodwink the people into thinking that you are doing something, when in truth and in fact you are doing nothing. [*Desk thumping*] I had the opportunity, Madam Speaker, to sit on a committee appointed by the Cabinet to assist with the overseeing and implementation of policy and programme in the health sector. That committee did more work in one year than this Government did in two years. We did more work. And the Member for Caroni East spoke to that earlier. We met every single week. It was after F&GP, I think, on Monday.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, yes.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Every single week eight Ministers and all the technical people in the health sector met at the Office of the Prime Minister and every week we are pushing, implementing this, implementing that, implementing the other: machines, equipment; complaints coming here. We dealt with it that way, Member for St. Joseph, not by calling the Opposition in a back room in Parliament somewhere and taking two years to study a report that lacks depth and substance. Because when you go to a joint select committee—assuming the Government uses its majority—you go to this committee, the committee meeting to do its work in November, you have to call the same people who the Member for Caroni East mentioned. I think one was his past student. He passed the subject?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah, yeah. Quite at the top.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Well, a good one. Well, the teacher would have been the influence. So you have to call those persons—[*Interruption*] Listen, I will not be disturbed by the Member for St. Joseph. He has his stress already there.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** A failing health Ministry, you mean?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, I just want to remind the House, this very Government—and I want to remind you—did not think a joint select committee could be convened and could complete its work in a week when they fought us, tooth and nail, [*Desk thumping*] to establish a joint select committee last September. They did not think a joint select committee could complete its work.

And today they want to put a joint select committee to complete its work—well, it is farcical to think on Monday, but by July, because the session comes to an end. What are you doing? And while that is happening, people cannot get beds in the hospitals, they cannot get medication, they cannot get critical services, they cannot get chemotherapy. That is a crisis. You have a crisis-ridden health system.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You cannot get lab work.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** You cannot get lab work as well. How will a joint select committee, starting to work in November, help the current problems that they face in the health sector? How? They cannot?

**Hon. Member:** Where is the urgency?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** So this is not urgent. What is urgent is getting medicine in the hospital, getting the [*Desk thumping*] operating equipment working, getting the services delivered. One hundred and fifty doctors unemployed. “Some pulling PH”, working as clerical officers. You cannot engage them. You cannot open the Couva Hospital in 20 months. You cannot do that. A joint select committee will help to do that? A joint select committee will open the Children’s Hospital? [*Desk thumping*] A joint select committee will build the Point Fortin Hospital, the Arima Hospital?

When we were in office, in 16 months or so we converted a shell building in San Fernando to a full teaching hospital. [*Desk thumping*] We moved from Point Fortin to Arima. The Children’s Hospital was built in three years, and today they make remarks about that Children’s Hospital. It was built by a Chinese contractor with an international reputation for building across the world. [*Desk thumping*] That was not built by a box-drain contractor. And it is there. The Chinese President himself went to that site. And when you cry shame and talk about the hospital, you are bringing into disrepute the Government and people of China. [*Desk thumping*] You ought not to do that.

Madam Speaker, so I am saying that this Government has alternatives to what they are doing now. I have given the Government two clear suggestions what you could do if you so choose. This, you cannot do. You cannot take time to do this. It will not happen. You are wasting precious time when you could be doing something real and tangible and fixing the system. We need a Minister of Health who is a “Mister Fix-it”, not a Minister of Health who just talks about protocol and strategy and tactic and architecture and menu and pillars, and so on, while all

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the pillars “fall dong”. You need a Minister of Health who is hands-on on the job. That is what we need, and to go and engage—I will feel sorry if the Minister of Health has to go and spend 26 hours attending JSC meetings to hear Dr. Welch and others on a report that says nothing new. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, it is now 4.30. This House now stands suspended and shall resume at five o’clock.

**4.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.00 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East, you have eight minutes of your original speaking time remaining.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Before we took the break, I reflected on the approach of the Government and really I am concerned, as I said before, with the governance approach and the approach as it relates to organizing the business of Parliament to make the best use of parliamentary time, parliamentary resources including material and persona. I just want to continue on that line to ask the Government, since we already have a Standing Committee dealing with health, could I ask the Government to withdraw this Motion and send those reports to the Standing Committee [*Desk thumping*] because there is precious little that a single-purpose joint select committee—now I just want to make that point too because it slipped me earlier. What the Government proposes to do is establish a single-purpose joint select committee with the specific responsibility of looking only at two reports, Welch I, and Welch II, for convenience.

Now that joint select committee almost by definition will be restricted in some way by what the mandate of the Parliament is, vis-à-vis, Welch I, Welch II, whereas the other Standing Committee that we already have established can look at this report, but they also have a broader mandate of health sector policy. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Give them a wide latitude.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** They have a wider latitude to bring in persons to get technical help, to bring in various health sector areas and so on, and the critical problems facing the health sector, they are problems of management.

Madam Speaker, like the Member for Caroni East, I read this report front page to back page, and this report speaks of management challenges, not necessarily policy challenges. They are pure management challenges—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Four of the pillars.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—four of the pillars, and like the Member for St. Joseph, I am no expert on the health sector, neither is the Member for St. Joseph. It is not our area. But as a Government Minister, you ought to understand management. Whether you are in housing, health, education, crime, it is a common problem of management, and you need to put in place institutions to manage effectively and deliver results. This will not—I will make one example, just one example, and without any detail at all. This bugging question that the Government appears to be playing around with, this is the problem of the children hospital. The report says that you have to put it to use although they could not have found a rationale, and I am coming to how a joint select committee will be constrained now because a joint select committee will read this report.

These people who—the folks who did this report, they are medical personnel by and large. I am very interested when I look at the persons who did the report. They did not have a breadth of specialization outside of health, into management, into development economics, into any area of governance because the children hospital was never meant as a stand-alone facility for only citizens in Trinidad. The children hospital was part of a wider landscape to diversify the economy into health tourism. [*Desk thumping*] So these doctors here could not look at health tourism. That is not their area. I did not expect Dr. Welch and the other doctors to—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** I am not going to let you, hon. Member, go much further. I think you used that as illustration of a wider point and I will ask you to move on please.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Sure.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** So, I could not have expected that anyway. The World Health Organization has also provided, I am told, specific policy guidelines that have been adopted by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago as it relates to health care, to provision of services, to provision of hospitals and so on. Those type of issues could be dealt with by the Standing Committee that exists. This joint select committee is hard-pressed to go into that area if the report itself does not speak to it—if it does not speak to it. A simple matter like the burns unit. It was established, a burns unit. It was felt that a burns unit was needed close to Point Lisas Industrial Estate and it will be housed at Couva, but the Dr. Welch

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and others will not have that information. That requires a wider ambit to look at hospitals and health care in a developmental framework, and that is why development studies are very critical for these sectors, health, education, crime, et cetera, to put the wider frame.

The Government speaks all the time of diversification. All the time. Everybody. It is like a mantra. Diversification, diversification or debt, but what is that? It is health tourism, it is sports tourism, it is getting into other areas to generate critical foreign exchange outside of your hard core area of energy, not just taxing the population. I understand that the court granted an extension of the stay on the property tax, but that is another—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member. Remember the objective of the debate that is before us. Please stick to that.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** So, Madam Speaker, the Government is a Government that has demonstrated over this period of time, 2015 to now, that they are not prepared to listen. If you are prepared to listen you will know that this Motion—and I am looking for a light word now—is not going to be effective. If you would take advice from us, whether it is on FATCA, it is on other matters which I cannot raise now, you would have been better served that you can come with a Motion and debate the report, you can send it to the Standing Committee. But I want to ask—because the Minister of Health by his earlier body language suggested that he had an interest in joining the debate. I want to ask the Minister of Health, at whatever time he intervenes, why could you not consider the establishment of a Cabinet subcommittee as we did on the health sector, [*Desk thumping*] driven by the very Minister of the Health and other Ministers to include the technical persons and the management people? Consider that as an option to deal with your management crisis. You do not need to have a joint select committee to tell you what to do.

Madam Speaker, when I reflected on the timeline I gave earlier, I think I was wrong. I made the point that this committee in reality would meet in November. They will not meet in November either. By the time budget finishes, November comes, it is Christmas. This is a committee, if established, is going to meet next year January. Will the Government say now that they cannot open the children's hospital, they cannot do A, B and C because they are waiting on the outcome of a joint select committee at Parliament? [*Desk thumping*] Is this a cover-up to escape responsibility for the day-to-day troubles, and controversy, and scandals in the health sector that you are waiting for a period from the joint select committee that you established—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Before you can act.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—before you can act? Action is what is required. The Minister of Health has in his possession “Suggestions for clinical services at the...”—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, your original 30 minutes have expired. You are entitled to 15 more minutes.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Yes, Ma’am.

**Madam Speaker:** You may proceed.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you so much, Ma’am. The Minister of Health has assistance. We are aware of that. He has in his possession a report dated 24 September, 2015, “Suggestions for clinical services at the Couva Children and Adult Hospital”. In the report without getting into details at page 66—I can call the page, Ma’am. Page 66 without reading it—you have all the recommendations, and the process, and the procedure, and the timeline for opening the children hospital. Man open the children hospital, please. [*Desk thumping*] You do not need a joint select committee to tell you that. Look you have a report before you. Madam Speaker, I said sometime it is a criminal act to have medical equipment lying idle when people cannot get beds, they cannot get treatment, they cannot get medical services. It is criminal to have buildings and equipment idle.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** CT scan, MRI.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** It is a criminal act to do that. In some other parts of the world you could go to the International Criminal Court for that, that people died, they cannot access services and you have a facility constructed with millions of dollars in equipment and you cannot have it operational.

You have 150 doctors unemployed and you cannot recruit them to run a facility that you have on a platter waiting to be used. They say it is a construction—I mean, I do not want to get into that again. Madam Speaker, the Government, as well intentioned as they may be, is going about this business in a complete upside-down way. By now, of course, the Minister will also tell us what is the revised time that they will give if they succeed in getting this business.

Madam Speaker, in closing now—I will just wind up in a few minutes—to say that it is a bad precedent to start when sector policymaking is removed from the Cabinet and placed into the Parliament—sector policymaking. A joint select committee as a stand-alone committee, which is proposed here, ought to be to craft law. First, if you do this it is because you have a Bill before you and you

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want the benefit of the House and others to come in to help you to make good law, that is a joint select committee. So it helps with law. If in these reports there were some area—and we went through, there is none—where they were proposing legislative change and we could have gone to the joint select committee, it is to help with crafting legal policy for the health sector. If it was legal policy for the health sector, you can go to a stand-alone joint select committee, but it is not a good thing that you go to a joint select committee as a stand-alone committee without a Bill, with a draft, without a conclusive report.

When we went for the procurement legislation, we had a conclusive report and we went to make a Bill. I want to remind the Members, when we went to the Joint Select Committee on procurement it was to make a Bill, it was to produce a legislative measure. So, yes, we did take policy material to joint select committee, but the outcome of that was to—that was the oven to bake a cake—bake a good piece of legislation. When they go here, this is not to make any law. This is not for legal policy, it is not for drafting, it is not for amending, it is not for changing law. It is to help with management. That is the purview of the Minister, and if the Government has no confidence in their Minister of Health, the Prime Minister ought to remove him [*Desk thumping*] but do not keep him in office and send to a joint select committee. I think this is an embarrassment to the Minister of Health quite frankly.

If I were the Minister of Health and they took my portfolio and subcontract it to a committee of the Parliament, how would I feel? Are they trying to send a message? You cannot take my portfolio as a Minister and subcontract it to a committee of Parliament when it involves management not—I made the point—legal policymaking, not law. Sure, if there is a Bill on housing we can go to a joint select committee because we want to get people's views on the Bill. But it cannot be that the Minister from San Fernando East cannot manage somewhere and we go to the joint select committee to help him manage. Then he should be removed. So this is really another example of incompetence, of an approach that cannot work.

This work of this committee which will be the 17<sup>th</sup> joint select committee for 41 people, or 40 as the case may be—41, yes. This is the 17<sup>th</sup> joint select committee for 41 people, where you are going to take critical Ministers and put them there, Opposition Members who are not full-time I might add, you put them to do that for a report that has no basis, that a simple committee of Cabinet could have gone through, distil it, come up with 20 recommendations and start implementing.



Now if there is another rationale for that, Madam Speaker, I would want the Government to simply share it with us because I am also very careful and scared that tomorrow there is a report on community development and they call for a next joint select committee. In fact, in the order of the business I suspect there might be another report, or another book, and we want another joint select committee, the 18<sup>th</sup>—the 18<sup>th</sup> joint select committee—and when this is happening you are not implementing. You are doing nothing.

So, Madam Speaker, with these few words, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh):** Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it was not my intention to enter this debate just to send the report to a joint select committee, but I think it is now incumbent on me to put the record straight on many issues raised by the Member for Fyzabad, my good friend the Member for Caroni East, and most recently the Member for Oropouche East. Madam Speaker, this has to be, in my view—and this is my view—one of the saddest days in my short parliamentary life.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And many sad days to you.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** I have been here since—yeah, you can joke about it—October 2010, and we are now into 2017. What I saw here today was a continuation of character assassination and internecine warfare amongst members of a profession, and I think that is sad. I do not know why the Member for Caroni East, holds his colleagues, members of the medical fraternity, in such low esteem, and even if you did, was this the place to demonstrate your contempt for people like Dr. Welch, Dr. Albert Persaud, Dr. Adesh Sirjusingh and Dr. Wayne Frederick? But I am not surprised—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 48(6), Madam Speaker, the word “contempt”. I have no contempt for anyone. He could alter his language.

**Madam Speaker:** Please continue.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Thank you. Madam Speaker, I recently had the displeasure where I saw this same pattern of behaviour displayed at the San Fernando consultation on the Welch report, the same behaviour being displayed by the Member for Caroni East, and to a lesser extent the Member for Oropouche East, where Dr. Anand Chattergoon got up and character assassinated his successor as Medical Director, Dr. Ramoutar, and I am wondering why. Why is this?

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So I leave the character assassination and the internecine warfare alone—  
[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Rise above.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Yeah, and we will rise above that—but the Member for Caroni East also made a revelation, apparently speaking on behalf of doctors in the public sector in Trinidad and Tobago, because he said that the doctors have no respect for me as Minister of Health. Those were his words. Now, if the doctors did in fact tell you that the doctors have no respect for me as Minister of Health, I am sure they would have told you that in some degree of confidence. But again, is the Parliament the place for that? I have respect for any officeholder. I would respect the office, I would respect the officeholder, but if it is the view of public sector doctors as enunciated by their spokesperson here today, the Member for Caroni East, that they have no respect for me as Minister of Health, well *c'est la vie*, we move on, but I will not shirk my responsibility to lead the health sector. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member for Oropouche East spoke about this report overshadowing my role as Minister of health and why do we need it. May I remind the hon. Member, that he was part of a committee chaired by then Sen. Vasant Bharath, a Health Oversight Committee, to look over the Member for Barataria/San Juan when he was Minister of Health?

**Hon. Member:** And deliver.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** May I remind him of that? And you know, this thing about the 150 unemployed doctors could be used to run Couva Hospital, it speaks to absolutely naiveté on the part of the UNC to say to take 150 junior doctors to run a tertiary institution without specialists. How could 150 interns; how could 150 house officers—if they are house officers—how could 150 registrars run a tertiary facility? It cannot be done in my part of the world. Part of the reason that we have to look at this thing is the upward mobility of doctors through the ranks and that is key to understanding how we fill positions because we have not been specializing our doctors, our consultants in areas of specialities and subspecialties, and the Members for Fyzabad and Caroni East know that fully well—know that fully well. It is only recently that the university started I think a suite of 11 DM programmes, and that would be a medium to long-term solution. So that is being tackled.

So I just want to express my disappointment that learned colleagues, medical doctors—the Member for Caroni East always speaks about his medical prowess, his academia, and I have no problem admitting the Member for Caroni East, you are an excellent doctor—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:**—but you play politics with health and that is the problem. So let me go on. You know, this internecine warfare and calling doctors' qualifications into question in the Parliament is so regrettable today. The Member for Oropouche East was, in my word—and if this is unparliamentary language, please call 48(6)—in an effort to further disparage a member of the medical fraternity's qualifications, you know, more or less intimidated the only reason he passed the exam was because the Member for Caroni East was his lecturer. Now where are we going with that?

**Dr. Moonilal:** That is the point you are making?

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Where are we going with that?

**Madam Speaker:** Order!

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Why are we character assassinating so many members of the medical fraternity here today?

**Hon. Member:** That is not praise.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I was praising him.

**Hon Member:** That is not praise.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** The Member for Oropouche East spoke about drugs and everybody speaks about drugs, and I have said the shortages of drugs have been chronic for years but we are taking concrete steps to fix it from this procurement cycle. May I remind the hon. Member for Fyzabad he was quoted in the *Trinidad Guardian* of August 14, 2015, about the same issue of shortage of oncology drugs? The same drugs and you all did nothing to fix it. You are quoted in the *Guardian* when you were Chairman of South-West Regional Health Authority. The Member for Barataria/San Juan is quoted in the newspapers telling people, "If you don't have CDAP drugs in the drugstore go out and buy it." But here we come to play politics with health again, but we for the first time are paying attention to the procurement process.

Madam Speaker, my colleague, the Leader of Government Business, when she was piloting this Motion said clearly, clearly and pellucidly clearly, that during the course of the debate, the June 5<sup>th</sup> deadline will be addressed, and the Members opposite made heavy weather of this. I will now like to move the following amendment, Madam Speaker, and beg to move that the Motion be amended:

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By deleting the words “June 5” and replacing it with the words “June 30” in the resolution.

So that is the amendment we are proposing. But I also want to take the opportunity in moving forward about how disparagingly again the Welch reports were spoken about, the works of Drs. Welch, Sirjusingh, Albert Persaud, Dr. Wayne Frederick, nurse Valerie from South-West, Mr. Martin de Gannes, et al. And if it is your view that the report is not as robust as you would like it, then the Joint Select Committee again is your place to air these concerns and make recommendations.

Madam Speaker, I need to address some of the issues raised by my colleagues opposite, Chemistry/Food and Drugs Division, and by coincidence today the report of the Joint Select Committee into food fraud was laid in this Parliament. That report which I read during my contribution speaks to the Chemistry/Food and Drugs Division, and let me tell the national community that the last administration did nothing, nothing, nothing to fix the issues at the Chemistry/Food and Drugs Division and I have not said that because it is not about blaming. I accept the responsibility, as Minister of Health, to fix all these things, but if you are going to harp on it, it is now my responsibility to put on the public record the mess that I found Chemistry/Food and Drugs Division in. So forget the mess, what have we been doing? We have allocated the sum of \$8 million to bring Chemistry/Food and Drugs Division up to some standard of where they could operate. Those repairs are due to be finished by October of this year. No one else took responsibility for it. We have taken responsibility for the mess inherited, but the long-term solution as we have enunciated, is to build a brand new facility to combine Chemistry/Food and Drugs, Trinidad Public Health lab and CARPHA. That is a decision taken by this administration, led by this Prime Minister.

The Member for Caroni East spoke about Zika—and you know it is coincidental just yesterday I had a presentation done by insect vector—and at one point in an earlier debate he said I could not stop mosquitoes from biting people. Tell me any country in the world where a Minister of Health could tell a mosquito not to bite people? But that is the frivolity which we engage with in this Parliament. When they were in office did they talk to the mosquitoes not to bite and cause Chik-v? But you had to deal with it. You had to deal with Chik-v, but we did not play politics with Chik-v. It is a serious issue. Arboviruses are serious issues, but let me go back. The data will show that between January to, I think, May 15, 2016, when Zika first landed here, by that time there were 47 confirmed

cases. To date, for the same period in 2017—because they say I have done nothing—using the same parameters, the same testing parameters, do you know how many confirmed cases we have to date? One. It has been done through policy, through an integrated management approach, a combination of public education—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East, I would like to hear the contribution please. Member for St. Joseph.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** So it was done through a combination of policy interventions. Spraying yes, increasing the fines for unkept lots, public education, and a Minister who went on the ground to lead this fight last year.

So we have moved from 47 confirmed cases in one period in 2016 to 2017 where we have one. Members opposite make heavy weather of that as if they did not have to deal with Chik-v in 2014, which was a crisis, but we never sought to make political capital out of it recognizing it is a public health crisis. And when we declared it as a public health crisis the Member for Barataria/San Juan chided me even when we did it before the WHO, and we are reaping the rewards for that to date.

Our friends opposite have made heavy weather of the fact that three persons contracted the HIV virus through tainted blood, and again in an earlier debate the Member for Chaguanas West will shout out I have blood on “meh” hands, and this, and that, and the other. You know when that happened under the watch of the Member for Barataria/San Juan, we did not do what you all are doing.

And the same model for compensation that the UNC used, the Attorney General is now using the same model for compensation.

### **5.30 p.m.**

It happened under your watch. It happened under your watch, but the solution is to fix the system. The solution is to fix the system. Under your watch, a woman was undergoing surgery in Eric Williams, under your watch, and the wrong blood was typed and she started to itch because she was reacting to the wrong blood, under your watch. Do I hold the Member for Barataria/San Juan personally liable for that? You cannot. You cannot but you fix the problem. She could have died but because she started to itch, they realized that something was wrong with the blood being given to her. Under your watch. Do not play politics with people's lives. Do not, it gets us nowhere and it will get us there very, very fast.

Madam Speaker, the Members opposite says that they want “ah Mr. Fix it” and that we are postponing action. Let me tell the national community and my colleagues opposite, through you, Madam Speaker, what we have been doing to fix things. Trinidad and Tobago is now a beacon in the Caribbean and I dare say in the Western Hemisphere for the swift actions this administration took and this Ministry of Health, in 18 short months, to bring this country in line with developed country status as far as maternal mortality is concerned. We did not do that by a Minister sitting around and doing nothing.

As a matter of fact, when I raised the issue in the public domain, I was chided by the Member for Fyzabad and the Member for Tabaquite. I remember that distinctly. The same fix-it approach and non-postponement of action is the same type of policy interventions we are now bringing to get our infant mortality rates down to levels where I am comfortable with it. We are not comfortable with the rates of infant mortality and we are disaggregating the figures into still births, neonatal deaths and so on, and trying to see what are the pain points. And let me tell you, in the issue of neonatal deaths, we have seen in the period 2016, January/June 2016 which was last year under this administration, over the same period January/June 2015, under your administration, a 50 per cent decrease in neonatal deaths at Port of Spain Maternity Hospital. That is “Mr. Fix It”.

We have also bought recently, which they have been asking for but never got, simple interventions. We bought a new incubator which is called a transport incubator with a built-in ventilator for Eastern RHA because of its location there. Because sometimes when you have the preemies, they had to be transported to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit down at Mount Hope. To date, that simple intervention has saved two babies’ lives. Two. So the days where you have to ventilate a baby by hand in a trip from Sangre Grande to Eric Williams, those days are over. The incubator maintains a good ambient temperature so the baby does not get cold and freeze. They are ventilated, and to date, that simple measure has saved two babies’ lives up at Sangre Grande. That is what we are doing. That is “fix it”.

When we do those policy interventions, we can have a better quality of life because we will be judged internationally on the achievements of our sustainable development goals as stated in Vision 2030, and I want to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Planning and Development, for the Vision 2030 document which speaks to health. [*Desk thumping*] And we will be judged on three parameters: how we deal with maternal and infant mortality, where we are leading now in maternal mortality, where we are coming to grips with infant

mortality. We will be judged by how we deal with HIV/AIDS and we will be judged by the NCD programme. And Trinidad and Tobago, through advocacy, in this Ministry, in this session, in this administration, is now seen as a global leader in driving the NCD programme.

Madam Speaker, our colleagues opposite spoke about “people cannot get beds” and so on. I inherited an absolute nightmare at the Eric Williams Adult A&E where you could not get beds. Yes, that is a fact. In early 2016—early 2016. Through policy interventions and I would tell you something, we even partnered with San Fernando General to bring best practice up to Eric Williams and now, we have a 75 per cent decrease in the numbers of persons waiting for beds at the Eric Williams Adult A&E. [*Desk thumping*] So we have not been silent, we have not been lethargic and I know our friends opposite do not want to hear the good news coming out of health because it is a convenient whipping boy for them.

Madam Speaker, our friends opposite spoke about nursing and let me tell you what, between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, and I want to thank the Member for Moruga/Tableland now who is overseeing tertiary education. When we looked at nursing, you have four or five schools of nursing in Trinidad and Tobago and each one has basically a different syllabus but all the students have to write one exam. Untenable situation.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Speaker, 48(1), relevance.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, this is in direct response to an issue that was raised with respect to nursing. Continue.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. All I am doing here is responding to issues raised and you were the ones who broadened the debate. So they raised the issue of nursing, nursing numbers. The way to get the nursing numbers up, in my view, is to rationalize the nursing education curriculum around the four schools so all of them teach the same syllabus, and the Member for Moruga/Tableland, the hon. Dr. Lovell Francis, met with all the stakeholders involved in nursing education and that is how we are moving. But others did not have that as a priority. This is a priority for us so that we could graduate more nurses locally, employ more local nurses and keep the brain drain to a minimum.

And the same thing that we have to do for doctors because you all spoke about doctors, hiring doctors. We have to give our doctors and nurses a migratory path up the ladder. What has been happening is that you have no migratory path and we are doing that now, and they have to thank UWI for the DM programme, but we

have to start to train more specialist nurses in Trinidad. So our general nurses, our RNs, can become specialists and then you could take in more RNs at the base. So those are some of the things that we are doing.

So, Madam Speaker, as I said, I had absolutely no intention of joining this debate. This is a very simple thing. We are not here to debate the Welch Committee, the Welch report. We are not here to do that. But I get the impression from the last two speakers, the Members for Caroni East and Oropouche East, that one, they see no value in these reports. They claim that the reports are—and these are my words now—probably not worth the paper that they are written on. They have disparaged the characters and credentials of the persons who did the report for which I am saddened.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** They cannot even defend themselves here.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** We have the continuation of internecine warfare that started in San Fernando consultation that has spilled over into the Parliament today which is regrettable. All we are here to do today is to agree that the Welch Report, Part 1 and Part 2, be taken to a joint select committee where Members opposite can give us your valuable—and I will say this: we want your valuable contribution because we cannot do this alone. When we do not consult, we do not consult. We consulting, we should not consult, you know. I think the population is fed up of this type of merry-go-round. If it is you do not want to participate in the Joint Select Committee, as articulated by or hinted by the Member for Caroni East and articulated and prosecuted to a greater degree by the Member for Oropouche East, that is your prerogative, but I am hoping that good sense will prevail and we look forward to welcoming the Members opposite to this Joint Select Committee.

Madam Speaker, with those—[*Interruption*] Yes. And I would need a seconder for the amendment. So, Madam Speaker, with those few words, I kindly thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Forde:** Madam Speaker, I beg to second the amendment of the Motion and I reserve the right to speak in the debate.

*Question, on amendment, proposed.*

**Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie** (*Caroni Central*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was listening to the Member for St Joseph, the Minister of Health and I got the feeling—I may be wrong—that perhaps, he is a little overwhelmed in the situation. I would not say by the job and I do not mean it in any disparaging way. And I think that he probably feels a little hard done by and I empathize with those



things. All I would say to him is that, you know, this vocation or this job or this responsibility and obligation that we undertake when we move into the political arena is something, perhaps more than any other profession, that teaches us that you must take the work seriously but do not take yourself too seriously. [*Desk thumping*]

And this is why sometimes I am very disturbed at things that happen in the Parliament when I see my colleagues, on the other side—some of them who have been in Government before, some of them who are new to Government, but all of us will be simply, at any point in which we serve, custodians for the process in a revolving door of governance for the country and I think we must understand some of those things.

I was very disturbed, Madam Speaker—and I want to say this because I do not think I can rest if I do not say it—by the approach by the Leader of the House today. The reason why a Leader of the House whose business is really to manage the business of the House of Representatives and Government's agenda is because the Leader of the House's responsibility is more than just Government business or Government agenda. It is about the management of the House and I want to remind Members of this House, if they would read the Standing Orders, that the Members of this House regulate their own business. [*Desk thumping*] So the responsibility, a major responsibility of the Leader of the House is to work things through with the Chief Whip on the other side and come to some reasonable arrangement so that the matter of the business of the House can proceed.

And when the Leader of the House comes here and literally insists on her position, bullies her way, and basically takes a wrong and strong approach, I find that very disturbing, especially after I have gone through a situation in which, in this Parliament, I did not get the opportunity to contribute on something and she played a major role in it. And I want to say that there are precedents in this House for the business of management of a joint select committee. In the case of the FATCA debate where the Joint Select Committee came at the end of an entire process, I spoke on that Bill in this House three times. I spoke three times on that same Bill and that precedent has been set and it has been set here in this House.

And generally, I cannot remember all the instances now, when we go to select committee, what happens is that there is an agreement between the Leader of the House and the Chief Whip in which they agree, well, we will have one speaker or two speakers or three speakers as the case may be and on the basis of that, they then decide, okay, we will refer it to the Joint Select Committee. So I cannot

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understand this unilateral high-handedness and arrogance to come in this House and tell us what we must debate and how we must debate on the debate before the House. So I want to raise that point.

The question of precedent is also important and every House has its Standing Orders, its rules, et cetera, but it also establishes certain conventions, and if we want to establish reasonable conventions, that there will be—in the case where we refer a matter to the Joint Select Committee, that we agree between Government and Opposition on how many Members from each side will speak, et cetera, then we must honour that convention and we cannot honour it sometimes and not the other, and if we modify it, we must know why we are modifying it and it must be by consensus or mutual agreement.

The other thing that I want to say in this matter is that the Leader of the House is in the habit of using the Standing Orders, which is well within her prerogative, as a part of an intimidatory tactic in this House, and I want to say that that brings, in my view, the House into disrepute. And if we are all here, when we come here, we are Members of this House equally, the Executive sits, there are Backbenchers in the Government side and there are Members of the Opposition, many of whom who have been Government Ministers before, and there is a wealth of experience as well as an opportunity for learning for those who are in Parliament for the first time, then again, we have a responsibility to conduct the Parliament in a certain way so that some good things will be passed on in the process and in the evolution of the parliamentary system which is ours, which is quite—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1).

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Caroni Central, I have given you some leeway. I understand the context that you want to set and therefore, I would ask you to move on now to the matter at hand.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, but we need to set an example here and that begins with the Leader of the House. So be—this document, this—[*Interruption*]*—No, I was going to respond to some things from the Minister of Health but I do not think that it makes too much sense in the circumstances. But I do want to add—sorry. I do want to say that in relation to this Motion itself which is:*

*“Be it resolved...”*

And the Member for Caroni East was correct. If we are to resolve something, that is to say if we have to take a view of something to do something, which is:

“...that a Joint Select Committee be established to consider the First Report of the Committee established to Review the levels of Health Care Delivery by the Regional Health Authorities and to Rationalise the System of Public Sector Doctors in Private practice as well as the Second Report of the Committee to Review the Levels of Health Care Delivery of the Regional Health Authorities and to Rationalise the System of Public Sector Doctors in Private Practice,...”—which was—“laid in the House...”

—at so and so time. If we are to do that, then it is important to refer to the things in the report that brought us here in the first place. That is the report that is being referred.

And I want to say that it is further—we are asked here:

“...*Be it further resolved* that this Committee...mandated...

(a) review and analyze the Reports;”

That we:

“(b)consider the findings and recommendations contained in the Reports; and

(c) report its observations and recommendations no later than...”

—now June 30, 2017 with the amendment. Now, the first question that we have to ask is why do you want a special committee to deal with this matter, a special joint select committee? Especially in the context in which the Member for Oropouche East mentioned the fact of a standing committee which meets on health matters to which the report can easily be referred. And the point is to be made that the business of Parliament is to make laws and when you look at this document before us, the both documents, one having to do with the rationalization of doctors and their practice and so on, public and private and the other one having to do essentially with what is the best way to rationalize the system to manage it, to administer it and to make it work. When you look at that, you begin to appreciate and to understand that when you go to joint select committee, there is no law that is going to come out of this process.

There are recommendations in the report now as some of my colleagues have mentioned and there can be no justification, in my mind—I came with an open mind to this and I felt that this was, perhaps, not appropriate to a joint select committee, that it could be done differently and my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East, outlined how it might be done or how it might be achieved and with better effect. But the more I heard my colleagues and the more I listened and I reflected on this, the less I see the value of going to a joint select committee. I

mean, besides the issues that have already been raised, you have a situation in which, really, you are asking parliamentarians to outline a way forward for the health sector based on this report, and I suspect if you go to a joint select committee, the time in my view, by the way, is too short anyway and if you go to a joint select committee, I imagine other reports can be brought into the brew and I imagine other people can be asked to testify or to appear or give positions in relation to this matter.

But I wonder why the Joint Select Committee? You know, we had a situation—and again, you look for the way the Parliament operates within the realm of our experience. That is to say September 7<sup>th</sup> and after, 2015. We had a situation where the procurement legislation, which had been passed in January 2015, was brought to the Parliament and it was—[*Interruption*]

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

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** Ma'am, I am speaking about joint select committees.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Caroni Central, I will give you a little leeway to develop your point. I understand you are making an analogy, I will give you a little leeway. Please proceed.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** Thank you very much. We had a situation and the Joint Select Committee was brought here. The Minister brought the matter here to go to a joint select committee. The amendments that the Minister wanted in the Joint Select Committee were very clear from the outset. That was done through the Joint Select Committee and despite the position of myself as an Opposition Member, the amendments that the Minister wanted were made. They were brought to the Parliament. We had a limited debate and that was the end of that. So the Joint Select Committee was used to achieve a certain purpose.

We asked, Madam Speaker, for the Joint Select Committee for the FATCA legislation. It was not accommodated until the very end when it was clear that the Bill would not pass unless our amendments were taken into account. And in that situation, the Joint Select Committee operated, in my view, as a joint select committee is supposed to operate, where the Members are of equal status and weight, where the issues are substantive and engaged and in which the joint report is a real joint report of everybody who contributed to the process.

And the reason I am raising this is that I am concerned about whether the Joint Select Committee advocated in this instance, having to do with these health reports, have to do with the FATCA model or has to do with the procurement model as practised here because both are now part of the history of this

Parliament. And I would say, if it were real and if it proceeded on the basis of the FATCA model then, perhaps, it would have some value and then the time would be taken to do something. But if it proceeded as the procurement model, then the end result will have been foreordained, preordained and therefore, it makes little sense at all. And I want to raise that because it is a serious matter. It has to do with why joint select committees are established at all and the thinking behind it.

When I look at this document, the substantive document before the House now, which we are referring to Parliament, I know for a fact—I do not know how many are open now—the document makes a very strong case for the strengthening of primary health care in the country, and having done so, it does not mention one statistic about the number of health centres in the country.

**6.00 p.m.**

I find that absolutely amazing. Up to 2015, I am aware, we had 105 functioning health centres in Trinidad and Tobago; the length of time for the functioning of each centre having been extended so that people could use the facilities and have access to them after work, and so on, when they came to their communities. Now, 105 centres in a population of 1.4 million—1.345 according to the 2011 census—gives you a health centre for every 14,000 people in this country. And out of the 14,000 people who may be attached to a centre, not all of them would be sick. Some who are not sick might get into an accident, or get sick or whatever it is, but they are not all going to get sick at the same time. And we have numbers for certain diseases, including chronic diseases, which are a major thing here.

The other thing the report does is that it emphasizes chronic diseases. It says, for instance, 46 per cent of the deaths have to do with heart and diabetes, but it does not say what the whole number is, so that it is very difficult to figure out what number the 46 per cent represents. It also says that 80 per cent is due to non-communicable diseases.

**Madam Speaker:** Member. Again, we are not debating the report, and while I understand that you most probably want to link it to a point with respect to the joint select committee, I would ask you to go ahead and make that point.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** And it does not make reference to the number of doctors, it does not make reference to the ratio, although it does talk about public/private. Madam Speaker, I think that there are flaws in the report that I do not think can be addressed—I am not sure—can be addressed by a joint select committee. And—  
[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** And, therefore, Member, that again falls within the remit of the joint select committee.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Madam Speaker:** So that if there is a point that you want to make why, regarding the resolution that we have to resolve here today, I will allow that but we are not going into the merits, demerits, weakness, whatever, of the report.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** Okay. What I would say is that on the face of it, there are a number of recommendations that make sense and that could be accommodated and that could be implemented, and there are others that may be considered by some committee that is knowledgeable about the health sector.

But I want to ask ourselves if we are really being honest about the problem of the health sector and the issues in the health sector. And I am simply raising this here in the context of any joint select committee that might meet on this or any other methodology that we chose, any other structure that we established, to look to the solution of the health challenges in the country. And I wonder if we might not reasonably ask the question: If part of the problem in the health sector is not political in nature? I feel it is an important question in the health sector and I feel that unless we answer that question honestly, I do not see how you are going to get over the hurdles required in order to create a system that works.

I wonder if we should not ask a question about the economics of supply for the public health system to meet the demands of that system and the structure that has been entrenched over time, over the—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Caroni Central, again as I say, this is not, and I made the point earlier, this is not a debate about the health sector. This is not a debate about the report. This is really whether the report should go to a joint select committee. I again caution you in terms of, if you are talking about structure, the point about structures was very well made by speakers on your side before you, so that you may really be going against Standing Order 55. I will allow you a little leeway to develop your point, but please, as it is, you are going beyond what I would consider, and which I have already ruled on, that is permissible within this debate.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, if I had to make a recommendation now, on whether this matter should be referred to the joint select committee, I would say that I do not see the value of it, I would be quite frank with you. *[Desk thumping]*

Because the substantial issues that need to be addressed, in my view, are not going to be addressed and accommodated in a joint select committee, and the point I was making, Madam Speaker, and if the Government chooses to ignore it, that is their business. They are free to accept, ignore or be indifferent to, what I say, what we say, or what anyone says.

But the solution to any problem in health, I have identified 14 issues in health that have nothing to do with anything in this report, because it is silent on it. It is absolutely silent on it. It does not say it. This report hardly even takes into account the Couva Children's Hospital. It does not take a position on it. Madam Speaker, if there is any country, from Jamaica in the north in the Caribbean, to Belize on the other side of South America in the Caribbean, if you could take that hospital and offer it to a country and tell them: "Would you accept it? We would give it to you." There is not a single country in the Caribbean that would not accept that offer. [*Desk thumping*]

There are many countries all over the world, some them developed, if you ask them if they would accept that hospital as it is, they would accept it, because of the quality, because of what it stands for and what it can do. But we in Trinidad and Tobago have a political problem about a decision to make a hospital available to children and to adults, because it was built by another Government. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to close, Madam Speaker, I do not want to pursue this matter anymore. I think it is futile to take this matter to a joint select committee, and I agree with my colleague that we should send it, if we send it anywhere, to the existing committee that handles health matters in the country.

I want to say as well and I want to make it clear, because I will make my views known, that I have raised and I am prepared to raise in this Parliament 14 issues that have nothing to do with the structure or system of health or the management of the health system, or anything related to that, that are absolutely essential to address if we are going to deal with the health sector in this country and I am prepared to make that public.

The other thing that I want to say is that, you know, sometimes we do things in the Parliament, we do things in Government, we do things in the country, that we think it is okay if we get away with it, and at the end of the day you never really get away with it, because at the end of the day, the reason we are here is because people put us here in the hope that we might serve them. That is why they put us here. I do not know if, as a politician going up for political office—I have

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done it twice; I have been a Senator once—if people understand, Members of Parliament, how people are, in terms of politics in this country, they will do anything and help you in any way to get into political office. But at the end of the day, when you get into political office, what happens is that they now own a piece of you because they have made you into the—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I would not allow this, in terms of what is the matter for debate. You have a few more minutes left, if you can come back to the substance of the debate, you are permitted to continue.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** All right. I would like to close then on the notion that this matter is not useful in a joint select committee, a specialized one. It might have some value in the Standing Committee on health matters of the Parliament, the joint select committee which already exists. And I want to say that the report is not a substantial report that will lead to any legislation and, therefore, I cannot see the value of it going to a joint select committee.

The point has already been made that Government should make its policy and the Parliament will debate policy if it needs to and that is another reason. You send it to the joint select committee. You do not want to debate, but would the joint select committee not benefit from the views of parliamentarians expressed here? And it is a jaundiced way of looking at this business of joint select committee as a way of preventing debate from taking place. Because when you send it to a joint select committee without a debate, and you bring it back as a report by consensus, with limited debate, what you have done is that you have cheated the population from understanding what the Parliament is doing. [*Desk thumping*]

So, you see me, I am getting tired now of all of these antics “yuh hear?” Because the population out there is extremely angry and they are going to get to the point of fierceness, and who wants to play the fool in this Parliament, go ahead.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, Member, I think you have come to the end of your contribution. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Ganga Singh (Chaguanas West):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleagues, [*Desk thumping*] the Hon. Member for Fyzabad; the hon. Member for Caroni East; the Hon. Member for Oropouche East; and the most recent speaker; the hon. Member for Caroni Central, for their articulation of the fundamental policies on this issue. Madam Speaker, this Motion really is ill-conceived, and I am of the view it has been conceived in



inequity and, therefore, what will be born out of any recommendation will be inappropriate for the society. And I make this point because it goes back to the fundamental role of Parliament. Parliament, according to our Constitution, in section 53, states Parliament has the power to make laws.

“Parliament may make laws for the peace, order and good government of Trinidad and Tobago...”

What is before us, two reports, two reports done by a committee appointed by the Executive, the Cabinet-appointed committee of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. And in the process, when that committee reported back to Cabinet, the Cabinet of this PNM administration saw it fit to now parlay the report to the Parliament for the Parliament and to appoint a joint select committee. That is the role that the Cabinet played in passing off the matter to the Parliament.

What law-making function is vested in this? What law-making function arises out of this report? My colleague, the Hon. Member for Caroni East, was dismissive of the contents of the Welch Report I and Welch Report II.

The role of the Government, so there are clear demarcations of roles. Our role is to make law. Our role is not to make policy. That is the role of the Government. [*Desk thumping*] And that therefore, if you are abdicating your responsibility to make proper policy and pass it on to the Opposition, then that is a matter in which you are demonstrating your incompetence to lead this country in its current circumstances.

Madam Speaker, when I listened to the Member for St. Joseph, the hon. Minister of Health, there is a lamentation; a lamentation, and he coined it in the phrase, “We want your valuable contributions. We cannot do it alone.” But this is an administration, in 2015, told the country “we red and we ready”; and now they are demonstrating an incapacity to do the things in which they articulated and enunciated in their manifesto. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, to further crystallize the point that it is the Executive role to make policy, we have a Cabinet-dominated Executive that makes—it is an Executive-centred decision-making process in the country, in the political system in which we practise, this Westminster/Whitehall model. That is what happens.

So when you go through the filtration process in the Cabinet, then you come through the various sub-committees of Cabinet, in the case of law, the Legislative Review Committee, you then bring legislation to the Parliament.

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Policy is a no-go realm for the parliamentarians because the role of the parliamentarians is to make law, and that, therefore, if you bring reports for the digestion of parliamentarians, given the adversarial nature of the Westminster/Whitehall model, then, therefore that is bound to fail. So it is not appropriate for you to bring reports before this Parliament for a joint select committee, because the political process will determine that you have an adversarial relationship within that joint select committee and that, therefore, the joint select committee is not the appropriate fora for reports of this nature. [*Desk thumping*]

Because, Madam Speaker, we have our own manifesto and our manifesto is crystallized for our approach, if we were to form the next Government, and, then there will be another manifesto for that purpose. But your manifesto has crystallized your position, well then this report ought to be guided by your manifesto, which is in Vision 2030.

What is the role of this Parliament in this process? And even if you want to give the Government “a bligh”, then you have an existing select committee. That select committee is an already existing joint select committee for the Health Sector. It is established, Madam Speaker, in Standing Order dealing with the whole question of departmental committees in Appendix IV of the Standing Order on page 82, the Social Services and Public Administration to include, education, health, gender, tourism, public admin, and so on. So you have an existing committee that will utilize the Members of the House, both on Opposition and Government; Members of the Senate; Independent, Government and Opposition. You have an existing committee. Why is there a duplication when you have such a small Parliament?

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Chaguanas West, I would just advise you with respect to the provisions of Standing Order 55(1)(b) on the course that you are embarking upon.

**Mr. G. Singh:** Madam Speaker, so you have a situation where you have existing a committee, and it is echoed and recommendations by my colleagues, that this matter ought to be sent to that committee and that that committee is indeed an appropriate, if you want to, find an avenue. And I think my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East made the point that this is something specific. There is no need for such specificity, which is a policy specificity, rather than a legislative specificity. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, so that, therefore, in my view, Madam Speaker, to utilize the joint select system in this report is totally inappropriate and untenable, untenable.

And as I see my friend, the hon. Minister of Health walking into the parliamentary Chamber, he said that we are playing politics with health. I want to ask the Hon. Member, when he visited Marissa Nelson on Christmas Day in the full face of the press, and from the reports on December 25, *Guardian*, 2016, taking “selfies” with Marissa Nelson, and God bless her soul because she is since deceased, what is that politics? What was that? What was that?

The Hon. Member also indicated that when one person died because of contaminated blood, I indicated that he had blood on his hands. That was said, not in a speech but sent as a remark. But he complains about that. But I want to ask him what measures you have taken to improve and to ensure that there is no contaminated blood supply?

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Would you give way?

**Mr. G. Singh:** Just hold a minute. Because from my enquiries, subsequently, nothing has been done. Nothing has been done. But if the Member has, in order to assure the public, anything to say and that we will cross-check, I will give way.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you. I will be very brief. What we had was a policy where blood that was tested as HIV positive, as policy which we inherited, was kept for further testing in case those tests were false positives. What we did after that unfortunate case was immediately change the policy so that any blood which is positive, which is false positive or not, is immediately discarded. We changed the policy immediately. Also, we asked Dr. Waveney Charles, former Director of the Blood Bank, to go in there and revisit and we are now rewriting all the standard operating procedures. Thank you.

**Mr. G. Singh:** Well, I am happy. So that there is yet anything to be done.

Madam Speaker, the point I want to make is that this, firstly that this method of bringing a report to the Parliament is really fundamentally flawed and badly conceived. It is not the role of joint select committees to formulate government policy and it is not standard practice for a policy to be brought at this embryonic stage when in fact pre-legislation should be brought and that, therefore, you cannot allow this sort of thing to take place in the Parliament, because what is happening, we are changing the character of the Parliament if we continue to engage in this process. We are a law-making body and this measure, this Motion, is ill-conceived. It has been conceived in inequity and if we were to proceed in the manner that the Government wants to do, then it will be born in sin. I thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan** (*Tabaquite*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, let me also join in congratulating my colleagues for the very robust contributions that they have made to this afternoon's debate.

Madam Speaker, I want to begin by returning to the essence of the Motion that is before us and in particular the section that reads:

*“Be it further resolved that the committee be mandated to:*

review and analyze the Reports;

consider the findings and recommendations in the Reports; and

report its observations and recommendations no later than June 5<sup>th</sup>...”

Well now, we got an amendment, June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Madam Speaker, I am concerned that we are in a country where the population is really, really tired of us in the Parliament, battling against each other like this, but in the words of the Member for Arouca/Maloney this evening, they want to know, from the voices of the people who represent them, what it is we are really going to change for them, in terms of the outcomes towards a better health care and better service delivery. Madam Speaker, I do not think that by taking this report and sending it to the joint select committee that you are going to advance their interest.

Madam Speaker, the Welch Report, from what I read, is really, in my view, a regurgitation of what is well known of the problems and issues in the health service. It is well known; over and over it has been said.

Madam Speaker, what it seems to me is happening is that we are lacking in this country on implementation, and I am not sure, whether sending the very problems to a joint select committee in the one month that is now being given to the joint select committee would result or give you results that will cause to be implemented, in the quickest possible time, what is contained in that report.

I would rather save the one month by adopting another approach, rather than the joint select committee that will cause an implementation to take place. Because, Madam Speaker, if it is that the joint select committee has to review and analyze the reports, how are they going to do this? Are they going to call witnesses? Are they going to call the doctors? Are they going to call in the RHAs? Are they going to call in all of these people to go over the same thing over and

over in order to review and analyze reports? Where is going to be the source of information that they are going to use to do that? So they are going to get a collection of information again. And then considering the findings and recommendations of the report.

You know, I am not sure that the joint select committee has all the expertise. And they will have to also incorporate expertise. And, therefore, I am wondering whether there is another way, the setting-up of an inter-ministerial team and also they would have available to it the technical expertise that will cause to be implemented, the recommendations in the report which are well, well known.

Madam Speaker, you know, I am afraid that, you know, we have to, in this Parliament, recognize that for too long we have been long on talk, long on analysis, long on reports, but very short on implementation. And that is why the patience of the population is running thin and that is dangerous for us. Because one day that patience will run so thin that people will explode.

Madam Speaker, I would like to think that the problem that we face is not the report. The problem is a management problem.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Tabaquite, I have given you some latitude. It is about four minutes now, the points you have been, have been made very well by several speakers before you. So I would ask you to go on to another point in your time that you have left.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Speaker, I would like that this committee that I am proposing, inter-ministerial committee, inter-ministerial committee with the technical expertise to get down to the business of taking this report and developing an implementation plan, developing the budget that is required and go ahead to get the business done as quickly as possible. [*Desk thumping*] That is what I am proposing. Madam Speaker, there is evidence for this that can be done because we did it while we were in Government. There was an inter-ministerial team and the RHAs used to come in with the Chairman, the CEO and what have you, and report to that committee, and what we used to do is ask some very simple questions: What are the moments of truth in your RHA? In other words, a moment of truth is everything that can cause a customer not to be satisfied, not to have excellence in delivery care and we work back from that and we were solving problems.

**6.30 p.m.**

I do not see why that cannot be, and that is why I said—and I know you stopped me—it is a management problem; it is a management problem. And, therefore, it raises another question, do we have the kind of managers in the hospital system

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that can do that? Madam Speaker, hospital management is a science. It is a specialist area, and I wonder how many people working in the hospital service as managers have been trained—that is the top ones—in hospital management, and that is a serious issue. And even if it goes to a joint select committee and you do not have the people to implement it you are going to go back to square one. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, systems are important but people deliver, and one of the things that is missing in the health sector is a proper vision. If you had a proper vision and mission for the health service you will find that things are different. Madam Speaker, you know what would be nice?—if every day somebody going to work in the health service could see before their eyes, we restore people to the fullness of life. What would that mean for them in terms of how they approach work? It would give them a purpose. If it is that passion is lacking in the way we do our jobs and getting things implemented, then the Joint Select Committee cannot help that. The Joint Select Committee cannot put passion into people's jobs. Leadership has to invest people with a purpose, and purpose drives passion, so that people will want to come to work and do the kind of job that they have to do, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] A joint select committee cannot do that.

Madam Speaker, I will share a little story with you about this. You see, sometimes we think that setting up these Joint Select Committees, and so on, is the solution to our problems. The problems are known but the solutions are with the people who manage the system, or who work sometimes at the lowest levels in the system. Madam Speaker, there was a CEO at Caroni (1975) Limited at one point in time, and this CEO had a very good characteristic of going out and meeting the employees of the organization, and, on this particular day, I accompanied him, and he went out where they were spraying the fields, where the planes will come down and dip and spray the fields and take off. And there was this one guy who had the job of standing up with a crocus bag on a stick so that the airplane coming down will know which field they are supposed to spray.

The CEO went up to this gentleman and put out his hand and said, morning, how are you? He said, I am the CEO. He says, the CEO, I have never met a CEO, and, reluctantly, he held the hand of the CEO and shook his hand. Then the plane came in, made its noise and went back again, and he began to talk to the CEO again, and he says, I hope you are not as foolish and stupid as the other CEOs. So the CEO was taken aback, he says, what do you mean? He says, why are you spraying these fields in the dry season like this? He says, well, there is the frog hopper, and we are spraying to ensure the frog hopper does not affect the cane.

He says, but you are a foolish CEO, where does the frog hopper live? He says, well, it lives in the roots, down at the bottom. He says, so why are you not putting medication down in the roots, why you are spraying the top when everything is not getting to it. And the CEO left there, because the man told him, we have a little factory in the research centre making something called metarisin, go and bring it and throw it in the fields, and that was the solution to the problem.

Are we consulting with the people? Would the Joint Select Committee do this, to know where the solutions are, to know why those people are not performing as they are performing? Are we going to go over that process? The report tells you all of the problems, but how are we going to inspire people to get them with the level of passion that restores people to the fullness of life when they come to that hospital. That is what is missing, you look at any hospital in the world and you will see they have a proper statement of mission, a proper statement of their values, and a vision for their organization.

Madam Speaker, so I recommend that this Joint Select Committee is not what is going to solve this problem, but I recommend that an interministerial committee, or, there is already a joint select committee, as they say, but you need something more than that, something to really put fire into the system so that we can get a better quality health service for the people. I thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Arouca/Maloney. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I want to thank all those who contributed to this Motion. But, Madam Speaker, I stand here to say that the attempt to get bipartisan views in a policy from a report through the use of a joint select committee is not new. I sat here in amazement, Madam Speaker, and heard those who sit opposite us behave as though such an attempt was something new in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, we have had Green Papers laid in this Parliament, we have had White Papers laid in this Parliament, from 1995 to 2001, several White and Green Papers were laid in this Parliament. Similarly, from 2010 to 2015, several reports were laid in this Parliament, and we were called upon to look at them and give a bipartisan view to the sitting Government at the time. Madam Speaker, the years that I have called are years when it was not the PNM in office, and this is nothing new. Madam Speaker, I am amazed that those who sit opposite us are now telling us, and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, that a joint select

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committee is merely a talk shop. These are the same people, Madam Speaker, who, during the FATCA debate, almost pilloried the Government for not going to a Joint Select Committee, and now, almost to a man who has spoken here today has said to us that the Joint Select Committee system is merely a talk shop.

Madam Speaker, I am appalled—[*Crosstalk*]—oh yes, the Member for Oropouche East said that very clearly, it is merely a talk shop. Madam Speaker, I am appalled that those on the other side could be so pretentious and could perpetrate such falsehoods. [*Desk thumping*] It is very disturbing. Madam Speaker, we have come to recognize that those on the other side believed that the arbitrary construction with questionable value for money and dubious fitness for purpose in the medical sector was what they thought was fixing the health service. Madam Speaker, if I may, education, health and crime are the three areas of governance that touch every single citizen in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, I am sorry if they on the other side could not understand the value of trying to establish a Joint Select Committee in order to deal with one of the issues that touches all of us in Trinidad and Tobago.

Like my colleague, the Member for St. Joseph, I sat in horror as I heard the Member for Caroni East vilify, and take to task, the Members who sat, not because of any money but sat because of love of country, and the fact that they recognize that the health system needs to be dealt it. It needs to be fixed. During 2010 to 2015, Madam Speaker, absolutely nothing was done of value to try and fix the health system.

We on this side, we are saying, if you do not want to participate in a Joint Select Committee we cannot force you, we are not going to force you. We have brought this to the Parliament and it is your right to say that you will not participate, and we are not going to try and force you to participate, but you are being revealed for what you are, unpatriotic. [*Desk thumping*] We do not need your help. We do not need your help to do the job that the PNM has done over several decades, but we do feel that it is important to do things a little differently. But, as I said, we will not force you to be Members of a Joint Select Committee, that is your choice, but the people of Trinidad and Tobago are looking at your behaviour.

Madam Speaker, they talked about MPs, or they talked about building a hospital on Chancery Lane, a teaching hospital, but, Madam Speaker, it came to our attention when we entered Government, that there was also a “bachee” upstairs of that hospital. Some of you may not know about it—[*Crosstalk*]—yes, “bachee” is a parliamentary word, so do not look—[*Interruption*]



**Mr. Charles:** Madam Speaker, 48(1), she is implying that we are involved in “bachee”—

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** 48(1)?

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, 48(6), Madam Speaker. I am not a “bachee” man.

**Madam Speaker:** Member. Please continue, Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Member for Naparima who is almost 70 never heard the word “bachee”.

**Mr. Charles:** I am not a “bachee man”.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Oh, okay, ask the Member for Oropouche East about the Hyatt, he will tell you about a “bachee”. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Charles:** Madam Speaker, please, this is overbearing.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Naparima, I did not hear the word “bachee man”, and I do not know that term, but maybe you heard another term, but I heard a “bachee”. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Charles:** “Bachees, eh.”

**Madam Speaker:** I would like Members to remember where they are and please display the decorum that is required. Member for Arouca/Maloney, in terms of your last reference with respect to the Member for Oropouche East, I think you can state that in another way. And, please, we complained earlier today about wasting valuable parliamentary time, let us not all be party to that. Continue.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I would like to remind those on the other side that in any discussion on the welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the mechanism to bring the best health services and the best health care to the people of Trinidad and Tobago is a concern of all 41 of us in this Parliament.

Madam Speaker, the Motion is clear. The Motion says, and permit me to read it again, Madam Speaker:

“that a Joint Select Committee be established to consider the...Report of the Committee established to Review the Levels of Health Care Delivery by the Regional Health Authorities and to Rationalise the System of Public Sector Doctors in Private Practice as well as the Second Report of the Committee to Review the Levels of Health Care Delivery by the Regional Health Authorities and to Rationalise the System of Public Sector Doctors...”

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I am being told that this is not about health care in Trinidad and Tobago. It is all about health care in Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker. It is to:

“review and analyse the Reports;  
consider the findings and recommendations contained in the Reports; and  
report...”—the observation.

Madam Speaker, I would like to refer to our Standing Orders, and to point out to Members on the other side what a joint select committee can do. Madam Speaker, amongst other things, it can send for persons, papers and records; report from time to time, appoint specialists advisors, either to supply information which is not otherwise available, or to elucidate matters of complexity. It is to meet on several issues. Madam Speaker, it is to elucidate, and that is all—[*Crosstalk*]—Madam Speaker, you know, I am hearing the Member for Caroni East talk about 30 days. [*Crosstalk*] Madam Speaker—

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Caroni East. Continue, Member.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** As is well known, two things, the work of the Committee can be preserved and it will go on to the next Parliament, and, in addition to that, if the time is not enough, the time can be extended. I do not know why they are pretending that it is the first time that they are hearing about the establishment of a joint select committee.

Madam Speaker, I would like to also take this opportunity to remind Members that all we are doing we are quite capable, and we said so in our manifesto. We are quite capable of continuing the policies that have already been put in place by the Member for St. Joseph. As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, a number of the things that have already been done by the Minister of Health and the Ministry of Health have proved successful. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, I do not know if we could be blamed for coming to this Parliament with the hope that there would be a different attitude, but, Madam Speaker, it was obviously with the same people with the same attitudes. In particular, I want to just make quick reference to a statement that was made by the Member for Caroni Central, who seemed to be still smarting over the fact that the Speaker saw the Minister of Finance before she saw him when we were debating one of the pieces of legislation. Madam Speaker, how long will the Member for Caroni Central keep that within his bosom?

Madam Speaker, I heard the Member for Caroni Central say that the Leader of Government Business does not consult with the Chief Whip. Madam Speaker, that is so—[*Crosstalk*]—Madam Speaker—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Caroni Central, we spoke here about decorum, precedent, and so on, please comply. [*Crosstalk*] Member for Caroni Central, you have been here for long. I am sure you know what you are doing is not proper. I am prepared, at some extent, to overlook it, but please, I cannot overlook it completely and indefinitely. Please continue, Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre and I have developed quite a healthy relationship. I would also indicate that when I was the Leader of Opposition Business in the Senate, and the Member for Chaguanas West was the Leader of Government Business in the Senate, we had developed quite a healthy relationship, and, you know, it is interesting that at times the Member for—the Chief Whip and I have a discussion, and then things change, and usually on that side. So when the Member for Caroni Central continues to harp on the fact that you saw the Minister of Finance before him, it happened today.

**Hon. Member:** It happened to me today.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** The Minister of Health attempted to rise, and I think it was the Member for Oropouche East, and you saw the Member for Oropouche East. I mean, Madam Speaker, that is the normal cut and thrust of politics. That is normal.

Madam Speaker, despite the fact that we may try to behave as civilly as possible to each other, it was their Prime Minister, Prime Minister Panday who said, politics is not a tea party. Madam Speaker, even though I may often look very regal and like a queen at a tea party, [*Desk thumping*] I do not believe I am in a tea party. I understand—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Misleading the House.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** You could raise the Standing Order.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** I understand where we are. Madam Speaker, I have attempted, as the Leader of Government Business, not to take us for long hours, as the former Leader of Government, the Member for Oropouche East used to do. I have attempted to keep an open rapport with the Chief Whip. Madam Speaker, I am sure if you spoke to the Member for Chaguanas West, in camera, he will tell you that we had a very, very cordial relationship, bordering on a love fest, almost. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Singh:** I just want to say, Madam Speaker, everything the Member for Arouca/Maloney has said is in fact true. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** So, Madam Speaker, I really had to say that because I do not know why the Member for Caroni Central is harping on that. When we proceeded to deal with a certain—it is escaping me now, but a matter that had been started—oh, the global services, the Member for Caroni Central had started that, I continued it, and I gave him his due. So, Madam Speaker, I think the Member for Caroni Central is a man who should know better than to keep that on his chest. You cannot keep things on your chest like that, cough it up and get over it. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] Sorry, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I would like to just indicate to those on the other side that we are still contending that a joint select committee for this purpose is in fact necessary. We are still contending that we would like to see the issue of health care dealt with at a bipartisan level, because it is imperative that we get the health services fixed for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. May I also indicate, Madam Speaker, we are not sitting and waiting for the results of a Joint Select Committee, we are continuing to work, and I congratulate the Minister of Health [*Desk thumping*] for the work that he has done. Madam Speaker, I would like to indicate that we have had quite a great rapport—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney, your original 30 minutes have been spent. You are entitled to 15 more minutes, if you so wish to avail yourself, please, proceed.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** I do, Madam Speaker, thank you very kindly. [*Desk thumping*]

We have developed a very strong rapport with PAHO, with the WHO, with the IDB, with the United Nations, all working assiduously with us as we have been rolling out our policy in health. I repeat, Madam Speaker, if those on the other side do not wish to participate, there is nothing we can do to force them, but we will continue. Obviously, the issue of the Couva Hospital is also one that has them smarting, but, Madam Speaker, we are not going to open that hospital until we find the right mechanism for it to work in the interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, there was absolutely no structure in place for that hospital to operate. There was no pharmacy licence for that hospital to operate. There was no waste water treatment plant for that hospital to operate. There was no laundry system in place. There was no catering system in

place. There was no incinerator in place. Madam Speaker, if we had opened that hospital the way they had left it, we would have been hauled before PAHO and WHO for acting in a manner that was deleterious to the health of anybody who went to that hospital. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, we are not going to act outside of the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, no matter what those on the other side may think, or may have done during the time that they served in Government. Madam Speaker, we have already said that we have put an evaluation team in place to evaluate proposals that have come to run that hospital effectively. And immediately upon that being assessed, the hospital will be opened for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] But, Madam Speaker, we are not going to be forced to do something that will not be in the interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, with those few words, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

*Question, on amendment, put and agreed to.*

*Question, on amended Motion, put and agreed to.*

*Resolved:*

That a Joint Select Committee be established to consider the First Report of the Committee established to Review the Levels of Health Care Delivery by the Regional Health Authorities and to Rationalise the System of Public Sector Doctors in Private Practice as well as the Second Report of the Committee to Review the Levels of Health Care Delivery by the Regional Health Authorities and to Rationalise the System of Public Sector Doctors in Private Practice, laid in the House of Representatives on November 9, 2016 and March 24, 2017, respectively:

*Further resolved:*

That this Committee be mandated to:

- (a) review and analyze the Reports;
- (b) consider the findings and recommendations contained in the Reports; and
- (c) report its observations and recommendations no later than June 30, 2017.

**7.00 p.m.**

**Joint Select Committee—Vision 2030  
(Establishment of)**

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):**  
Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

*JSC Vision 2030 (Establishment of)*  
[HON. C. ROBINSON-REGIS]

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*Whereas* the Draft National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030) was laid in the House of Representatives on April 21, 2017 and in the Senate on April 25, 2017;

*Be it resolved* that a Joint Select Committee be established to consider the Draft National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030):

*And be it further resolved* that this Joint Select Committee be mandated to:

- (a) review and analyse the Draft National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030);
- (b) consider the recommendations contained in the Draft National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030); and
- (c) report its recommendation for the development of a National Development Plan no later than June 21, 2017.

Madam Speaker, with regard to this Motion I would like to state from the outset that this Motion represents Government policy. Further to that, I would like to indicate that the objective of this Joint Select Committee is very clear, and we are trusting that those on the other side will be *ad idem* with us in terms of the establishment of this Joint Select Committee.

Madam Speaker, you will know the history of the development of vision documents in Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, the most recent was the Vision 2020 document and the implementation plan which was laid in this Parliament, but never debated.

We on this side are of the view that oftentimes a government comes into office, has a development plan, or a development plan of sorts, and when another government comes in, things are scuttled, and despite the fact that at times things may have been going quite well and the population has made a decision to change the Government, the plan of action or the vision that would lead us on to developed country status is allowed to languish.

I would like to point out that this Joint Select Committee is being asked to be established to consider the recommendations contained in the Draft National Development Strategy. Madam Speaker, those countries that have proceeded along a development path that has been agreed upon nationally, have developed much more quickly than those that have not done so. I would like to point out that at this time Jamaica has its Vision 2030 document, and may I indicate that Jamaica came to us in the Ministry of Planning and Development, when I served as Minister of Planning and Development previously, to ask for our help in developing their vision document.

At this time, Jamaica is way ahead of us in terms of the implementation of their vision. Despite the fact that in between that time when they came, around 2003 and now, there was a change in government. But what made the difference was that the vision document was debated in the Parliament, agreed to as a national strategy and was implemented. So that no matter who was in government, that was the strategy that would be used as the national strategy of the country.

Similarly, we have Malaysia with their vision document. We have Singapore with a vision document. Nepal has its vision; India has a vision; Nigeria has a vision; Kenya has a vision. The difference has been that the Members of Parliament agreed that this is the way that our country will move. Madam Speaker, it does not change with a change in administration, because the objective is to ensure that this country, or whichever country that has its vision, it is a vision for all the people as we move forward, and this is the objective in setting up this Joint Select Committee.

Between the years 2007 and 2009, there were 123 objectives of Vision 2020, and 85 of those 123 objectives were either ongoing or achieved. Moreover, 51.6 per cent of the proposed objectives were in either embryonic stage or had been birthed and were moving forward.

What we are here to ask this Parliament this evening is to allow a Joint Select Committee, made up of the representatives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, to sit together and determine if this draft document is how they want to take this country forward, or if they feel that changes need to be made.

Madam Speaker, I want to remind my colleagues—all my colleagues—that with the Vision 2020 there were several multi-sectoral leaders. I want to point out that some of the persons who participated were: Mr. Arthur Lok Jack, who was the Chairman, Dr. Ronald Ramkissoon, Dr. Terrence Farrell, Dr. Rolph Balgobin, Mr. David Abdulah, Mrs. Nan Ramgoolam, Professor Clement Sankat, Dr. Tewarie—who was Chair of the Culture and Attitudes—

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Which Tewarie? Bhoendradatt?

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** The Member for Caroni Central, Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie. We also had Mr. Derrick Murray. We had Mr. Trevor Boopsingh—God rest his soul—Mr. Robert Riley, Mr. Russell Martineau, Dr. Debra Thomas. Madam Speaker, why I am calling some of these names—we had Maj. Gen. Ralph Brown, Mr. Eustace Seignoret, Dr. Anton Cumberbatch, Dr. Assad

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Mohammed. We had a wide cross-section. In fact at its height, we had at least 600 people, 600 citizens, 600 patriots who participated in the development of the Vision 2020. And I do not know what happened to Dr. Tewarie, he was once a patriot.

I would like to put to this Parliament that it is imperative, if we want to see our country succeed, for us to have a national vision. I also want to indicate that if those on the other side are taking the same attitude as they took in the previous debate, that this is not necessary, they do not want to participate, we are not here to force them.

But we are saying that this country belongs to every one of us, the 41 of us here and the 1.4 million people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are the representatives of those 1.4 million people, and if we are to be successful, we do need a national vision. We do need to take our country forward in a manner that all of us agree upon. But I would also make the point, Madam Speaker, that if it is not their will, it will not stop us from moving this country forward, in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, with those few words I beg to move.

*Question proposed.*

**Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie** (*Caroni Central*): Thank you very, very much, Madam Speaker. As the Member was speaking—the Leader of the House and the Member for Arouca/Maloney—I just came upon, with the help of my colleague here, an article which is headlined “Jamaicans not buying into Vision 2030”—and that article is of March 16, 2015 and I will just read two paragraphs:

“Jamaicans on a whole are not buying into an ambitious plan, which has the rare support of two major political parties, to transform the island into a modern first-world country over the next 15 years.

But against the odds, the guardians of Vision 2030, the national development programme that is supposed to make Jamaica the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business, are reporting substantial progress in implementing...”—et cetera.

This just reinforces in my mind the problem I have with addressing the duality of personality which I often see in the Member for Arouca/Maloney. I do not know if it has to do with the role she plays or what it has to do with. Take, for example, the fact that she indicated that I played a role in Vision 2020, the



bringing together of that particular vision for Trinidad and Tobago—which I did, and I did so earnestly. If I do not want to do something, I do not do it. If I choose to do it, I do it to the best of my ability. It is my nature. I gave it my all, I did what was required.

What I chaired was the committee on tertiary education, and I made very clear recommendations for rationalization of the tertiary sector. I think when I was finished with it, they took it and threw it in a dustbin somewhere or on a shelf somewhere, but there was no action that was taken by the Government at the time that had any alignment with any of my recommendations. So I say that loud and clear, it is absolutely true and anything else that you say is false, except that I sat on the committee, [*Laughter*] and that I did an earnest and honest job in making clear recommendations in the national interest. I did not do it alone. I think there were eight or nine members of the committee, all of whom worked hard on it, and they were from various institutions in the country.

The second thing I want to say is that she said I was a patriot then, and she does not know what happened. You know, I am not the kind of person to beat my chest about things eh, but I have built more institutions in this country, than most people in this Parliament can name. [*Desk thumping*] I do not want to go into that. All right? And when I say build, I mean build. Some of them from the ground up, all of them with the help of large numbers of people. You “cyar” do anything by yourself, but I did it. All of these institutions, none of them are owned by me. None of them I make money from. None of them I do anything that has to do with any personal interest for, and all of them have to do with the good of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is a true patriot.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** So “doh” come to me to talk about patriotism and so on, and I “doh want nobody” to tell me I am a patriot. I know how I live. I know how I got here. I know where “I going” and I am fine. “I doh really need nobody to tell me nothing.”

But I want to remind the Member for Arouca/Maloney that the economic matters of state are meant to derive from the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. If you look at it, in this Constitution in the Preamble:

“Whereas the people of Trinidad and Tobago”—so and so.

In item (b) it says:

“Whereas the people of Trinidad and Tobago—

- (b) respect the principles of social justice and therefore believe that the operation of the economic system should result in the material resources of the community being so distributed as to subserve the common good, that there should be adequate means of livelihood for all, that labour should not be exploited or forced by economic necessity to operate in inhumane conditions but that there should be opportunity for advancement on the basis of recognition of merit, ability and integrity;”

This is the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, and while it talks about everything else—the governance system, the Parliament, the Presidency, the Judiciary, the Executive, et cetera—it speaks in the Preamble to this business of how the economy is meant to be managed. And there is a philosophical perspective that guides this, which I do not wish to go into today, and which is important to appreciate and to understand.

Having said that, I want to talk a little bit about this document, which is the substance of the resolution here before this honourable House—Vision 2030. I want the Hon. Member to know that I have read every page of this, and if she would look through the document that I have, she would see markings from time to time on the pages. I am a person who “doh” mark up too much, so I mark the things that I feel are important for whatever reason. She would find it marked up.

Now, Trinidad and Tobago is a country that has major challenges, and I want to acknowledge that, and those challenges are known. There is the shale gas revolution which is changing the world and changing the energy matrix. There are the production and price issues that are affecting us here in Trinidad and Tobago. But there is also another element, you know, which is that there is a spiritual disconnect in the world, and the chaos we see all around us in the world, from whatever part of the world we start to the other, is a reflection of that spiritual disconnect and the alienation that has set in, in the system as we know it. And Trinidad and is not exempt from that; that is a reality in Trinidad and Tobago. And as economic conditions become hard and harsher, we will see that the chaos around us is more deeply connected to this spiritual malaise that is established in this society.

There are other things going on in the world too. There is new thinking about the planet and about development. There are issues related to climate policy, sustainability in development. What is the personal connection, if we say that there is a connection between the spirit and the manifest chaos? How do you get sustainable hearts? My colleague, the Member for Tabaquite, you know, he was speaking earlier on the health matter and I was quite taken aback because of the

direction that he had taken, because he has gone in that human direction to talk about vision and passion, et cetera. How do you get sustainable hearts? How do you get sustainable lives? How do you get sustainable communities? How do you get a sustainable society? What does a country like Trinidad and Tobago need to do? These are the fundamental questions that we must ask when we talk about policy.

Policy might be about economics, and it is rooted in economics and it might be development and at the heart of it, it has to do with the development of people and communities and so on, but there is something else that is critical in that process. There are some basic answers that we have already agreed on many times about Trinidad and Tobago. We have agreed 100 times—and I use that to simply throw out a number—that we must rely less on energy and energy assets and revenues. We have agreed that we must diversify the economy. Other sources of revenue and income, we must find them. Other sources of job creation, we must find them. New sources of growth, we must find them.

We have agreed, over and over again, we need education, skills, productivity, competitiveness, entrepreneurship, investment, diversification, creativity and innovation. We have agreed over and over that we need an export disposition and an export orientation and export diversification. It is not just to sell more, but to sell more places. We have agreed on investment diversification. We have also agreed on market diversification. All these things have been agreed, government after government we understand. So the problem is not what to do. The problem is not what to do. The problem is how to do it, and what is the context and the framework that will make achievement of what you intend to do, possible.

Now, I want to say, Madam Speaker—and this is very important—that we did not leave this Government stranded when the people voted to put them in office. We knew what was coming. If you look at the manifesto that we presented to the country, you would see that we have an entire page—I will not read it—that has to do with how we would manage. And we said that we would manage at a \$45 oil price, and that there are certain things that we would attend to that. There is a whole page on that in the manifesto. We know what was coming, we knew adjustments had to be made and we said what we would do.

We did not leave this Government stranded. We had in here a diversification plan, and again I can go and find it. We put in place the energy investments that they are now reaping in Trinidad and Tobago through the various companies that are finding oil and gas, and that will continue to find oil and gas until 2022 in Trinidad and Tobago. Those policies were put in, in 2011 to 2015. [*Desk*

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*thumping]*

We added \$13 billion to the services sector, during the five years that we were in office, to the GDP. And that \$13 billion, added to the GDP by the services sector, indicated in very tangential terms that diversification was happening in the country. We made arrangements through Pricewaterhouse and a legal advice for the beginning of the development of Invaders Bay. We put contracts down in Chaguaramas that would have brought \$2 billion in investment in Chaguaramas. We left a plan of action in the Ministry of Planning and Development. It is called here Action 2025, and it is a development plan for 2015 to 2025. We did our work. We did our work, and if you go anywhere in any document that is presented legitimately and honestly, you will see the work that we did at the Ministry of Planning and Development. The public servants worked diligently, they worked well—as they did, some of them on this document, the Vision 2030—and they worked as patriots of their country. Now, the world though is as it is.

VS Naipaul has written a book, *A Bend in the River*, in which he talks about the collapse of a country. A fictional country, but it looks like a country that is built on the crises that took place in Zaire when it was called “Zaire”. He wrote that, and in the first lines of his book he said:

“The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it.”

So yes, we have to make an assessment of where we are now, and decide where we want to go—there is an assessment in this document—and to decide how we will get there. In our context, when we think things are bleak—because the cry of this Government is how bleak things are. From September 07, 2015 to now, all they have been telling the population is how bleak things are. So when we think things are bleak, and you meet your darkest moment, that is where we see the opportunity for a new beginning. And that is a difference in the disposition and vision about the country.

We see the bleakness, the difficulty, the challenges as an opportunity for writing a new chapter, for taking a fresh initiative. This might seem airy-fairy to some, but there is a saying that as we think, as we imagine, as we intend, so do we create reality and the world that we live in. The whole point of a Vision 2030 is that starting at some point, maybe now, what you are going to do is to create something for the future. But there are important questions that arise.

Remember I said that in the world all the things that we see, part of it has to do with a spiritual connect. How do you get to higher levels of passion and energy and fire? Because at the end of the day it is people that make development happen. You

see, we have this notion of feeling that it is the Government that causes development; that the Government makes things happen. The Government is an agent, but it is when you have the passion, the fire, the energy of the people, that development actually happens.

How to create a field of human energy connected, so connected as to achieve something meaningful together?

**7.30 p.m.**

And anybody who knows Trinidad and Tobago will know that despite the economic plans, all the issues, that is the missing ingredient. And I want to say this, which has been said by wiser men and women than me, which is that you cannot solve a problem whether it is a societal problem or an individual problem or a challenge of any kind with the same consciousness that created the problem. It is not possible to do that. So, you need something else. And I want to relate to this issue of how you see power. I alluded to it and something that I said earlier, but I want to say. If—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, I just want to remind you what we are debating here is the really the appointment. So that if you can quickly make the connection between what you are saying and what the subject matter of the debate is. Thank you.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** It is exactly related to that, Madam Speaker. Okay? You know, certain people think a certain way, they present a certain way, and they make their arguments a certain way, and it is the framework of Parliament that gives you the freedom to do that. And, you know, if you look at power in the context of “we in charge now”, if you look at power in terms of party paramountcy, in terms of partisanship, divisive tendencies, arrogance, belligerence, sometimes the misrepresentation of facts that is one way of looking at it. But if you look at power as trusteeship, okay?— that I have, or we have the responsibility to use the time and the opportunity given to us to do what is right so that we can be a force for good in the world, that is a different notion of what power is and therefore, you become an instrument through which larger forces actually work. And there is a big world of difference between a world of trusteeship and the world of personal power.

And what that means is that in any vision that we have, the country or the people or the society has a longer time than we have in our duration to govern, and this is an important concept in the business of the management of a country. And therefore, I want to say that we in this country have to take, address the

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notion of power in order to now address the issue of policy. The missing ingredient, as I said, is this element of summoning passion. Because if you say that you need a different level of awareness to solve a problem that was created at a different time, a different attitude, a different vision, different actions, et cetera, where is that going to come from?

Now this Government, Madam Speaker, it seems to me and I can only express my view based on observation, is devoid of any spiritual connection with the landscape. [*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member, again, this is with respect to the appointment of a joint select committee. I have given you a lot of leeway. You have spent almost 23, 24 minutes. Please, make the connection to what is the substance.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** Okay. I understand. You want me to say one, two, three, four.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I do not want you to say anything in particular other than to address what is before us.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** Yes. Madam Speaker, I will try to align myself with your own thinking of how I should be proceeding here.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, Member, I would want when I rule that we just continue. Okay? I am trying to avoid the innuendoes. Please, continue.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** Madam Speaker, there are no actions that are identified in this document that will make development happen. There are no growth sectors identified in this document. It does not speak to the recession that we are in from which we must move—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, I would like to invoke Standing Order 48(1), please.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, if we recall, this is a similar sort of debate to the one before and the ruling applies, in that we are not going into the substance of the report or the recommendations, the observations or shortcomings. What we are really saying here is, yes or no we should appoint a joint select committee. And I think we have had precedent from the previous debate which if we follow, we might all be on the right track and save time. So, I will ask you to comply with my ruling, please.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** I will always comply with your ruling. This Motion here says:

“*Be it resolved* that a Joint Select Committee be established to consider the Draft...”—policy.

Okay?

“*And be it further resolved...*”—so and so and so.

In my own resolution of my position on this matter, should I not be allowed to refer to this document, Ma’am? I am asking you a question, I am willing to sit down.

**Madam Speaker:** No. I take it you are being rhetorical because I have already ruled on that. I have said what the parameters are.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** This document was laid in Parliament and this is the policy of the Government, the Member for Arouca/Maloney said so, and she said she wanted the Joint Select Committee for a specific purpose. And I would think that I would be free to express my view on what I have read. I just said I have read—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Speaker:** And Member, I am saying that maybe at a subsequent debate that will come up. What we are looking at now is the question of the appointment of a joint select committee. The business of the Joint Select Committee will do precisely what you are setting out here to do, which I have ruled cannot be done.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** You see, Madam Speaker, with all due respect to you and your office and the Member for Arouca/Maloney who says she wants to reach out to the Opposition, et cetera, 48(1) invoked like that does not really help her cause *[Desk thumping]* because—so I proceed as best I can.

The National Development Strategy date 2016-30 was laid in the House of Representatives, et cetera, on April 21<sup>st</sup> and in the Senate on this day. I have it here. I feel it is reasonable for me to refer to a document which they say is policy which they have put before the House.

“*Be it resolved* that a Joint Select Committee be established to consider a Draft National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030):”

And she got up here and said how it was—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Speaker:** The Hon. Member got up here—the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** The Hon. Member. It was not meant pejoratively, I would like to say that. All right? It is just that when you are speaking sometimes you say he or she. So, the Member for Arouca/Maloney, she talked about Jamaica. I pointed out what happened in Jamaica and I said that there is a disconnect between what they say and what they do and the spirit of what they say and do and what is articulated here. And I do not see how you can leap to Vision 2030 if, Madam Speaker, you are not even addressing the current recession in which we are in or there is not even a couple of pages which indicate that some transition is necessary to do that. I really do not know how that is possible.

There is the challenge, in this country, of diversification and the document does address that. And when you look at the reality of Trinidad and Tobago, besides the recessionary situation, you have a sliding manufacturing sector and a sliding agricultural sector. Services sector was on their way up, I mentioned \$13 billion over five years. That has now begun to decline. The Member mentioned the services sector loan from the IDB which is meant to support ICT-based services exports from Trinidad and Tobago which would be a new industry, which would be an expanded industry based on some existing industries, and which would also generate foreign exchange which they identify as a challenge in Trinidad and Tobago.

But I saw some of ads related to that and I know, I almost called the Minister, but I said to myself, you know what?—she would not really want my help. Because I wanted to tell her that some of those ads revealed a misunderstanding of what a certain section of that programme for which we secured the loan is about. But be that as it may.

The country has challenges which are not identified in here which are important to know. When you take the overfocus on the energy sector on the one hand and the appreciation of the exchange rate on the other—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member for Caroni Central, your original 30 minutes have expired. You are entitled to 15 more minutes. Again, I caution you to please tie in what you are saying to the resolution for the appointment of a joint select committee.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** Well, I suspect that the reason to have a joint select committee is to have good policy, and one of bases of good policy is to have accurate information. So when you take these two factors, the over-dependence on energy and the appreciation of the exchange rate, we find that there are only in Trinidad and Tobago 18 sectors today, all right, which have a competitive



advantage; in 1999 it was 34. So that tells you something about what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago today. What does that say for export, for foreign exchange inflows and for diversification?

And we have a number of things that are going well in the energy sector. We have EOG, BHP, Angostura, EOG Sercan, those are completed, they will enhance output. We have TROC which is on stream; Juniper that is supposed to come in October, I hear it is coming in earlier; Angelin; Iguana; Macadamia; Savannah, we hear. I “doh” know what is happening with Dragon. BHP has possible yields on the future. There is the possibility of smaller, stranded fields of gas. All of these things are very good, for one, the energy sector, and also for the diversification of other sectors.

But while issues such as those are being identified here, are being addressed here, there are dissonances in the functioning of the Government. For instance, hard restructuring decisions and—[*Interruption*]

#### PROCEDURAL MOTION

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 15(5), I beg to move that the House be allowed to sit until the conclusion of the matters before it.

*Question put and agreed to.*

#### JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE—VISION 2030 (ESTABLISHMENT OF)

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Caroni Central, again, I caution you. We are not debating the development strategy or the Draft Development Strategy.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** Well, I think in this matter there are real issues that need to be debated and discussed and the Motion at the present time, based on the ruling of the Speaker, really does not allow me to discuss some of these issues. I cannot refer to the document that is before us; I cannot refer to other documents that are related; I cannot relate to policy issues. The only thing that I can say is whether I support or do not support this matter going to the Joint Select Committee. It seems to me, given what I said earlier, about the precedence, Madam Speaker, I mean, we are not here following even the precedence that we ourselves have set.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, again, I am sure you do not intend that the way that it is meant. Kindly just deal with the Motion as I have interpreted it in the remaining time that you have.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** You see, there is a dangerous misunderstanding of how you achieve a vision here, and that is identified by the centralization of the coordinating mechanism in the institution at the Ministry of Planning and Development together with other Ministries, and it does not take into account anything that has been done, for instance, in the National Spatial Development Strategy with which the Minister would be very familiar, which divides the country into different regions and they are for integrated planning, physical planning with other development planning issues. It does not take into account their own policy of decentralization and devolution which is never mentioned here for local government—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member, again, and this is going to be the final time; if not, I will have to invoke the Standing Order. We are not debating the Draft National Development Strategy 2016—2030; we are not reviewing it; we are not analyzing it; we are not considering any recommendations, any weaknesses in it. It is a question of the appointment of a joint select committee for the purposes as set out there. You have a few minutes left, it is either you can address that or I will have to ask you to, please, resume your seat. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. B. Tewarie:** Well, I suppose if the Government wishes they can review, they can appoint a joint select committee; and if the Government wishes that committee can review and analyze and consider the, review and analyze the Draft National Development Strategy Vision 2030; and if the Government wishes they can consider the recommendations considered in the Draft National Development Strategy; and if they so desire they can meet the deadline or extend as necessary to report on the recommendations and then we might have a debate in the Parliament. I suppose at that time I will get an opportunity to speak.

But I do not see the wisdom, Madam Speaker, in proceeding this way, and I do not see the value of the contributions here, if the contribution is simply that you have to say yea or nay to the appointment of a joint select committee. [*Desk thumping*] I find the course in which parliamentary debates are headed to be very, very disturbing, and I must say that.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I take that as a reflection on the Chair. I am sure that you do not intend it like that. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Rodney Charles (Naparima):** [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak on the Motion:

“*Be it resolved* that a Joint Select Committee be established to consider the Draft National Development Strategy 2016-2030...”—and the document is known as “(Vision 2030):”

I have listened to your ruling and I will not get into the substance of Vision 2030. What I would do essentially is to give six reasons why I am of the view that this document is inconsistent with our national development and taking it to a joint select committee would not, at this time, add value to our country's development and provide constructive remedies to the plethora of challenges which we face as this time. [*Desk thumping*]. So I will go into the six reasons.

In the first place the preface, as the Hon. Prime Minister indicated, and I quote:

“I am committed to rebuilding our country and economy, restoring the confidence, equity and social justice, and improving every area of national life.”

And he goes on:

“My Government is...”—prepared to take—“...the tough decisions needed to get the economy back on the road to prosperity and sustainable development.”

And he says:

“The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is clear about what needs to be done.”

Madam Speaker, we on this side are of the view that the Government is not clear, at this time, on what needs to be done [*Desk thumping*] to take us into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and they have come up with Vision 2030 because they have heard from us and from the society and many interest groups that this Government does not have a plan.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

This document is merely a PR document to give the impression that they have a plan [*Desk thumping*] and they want to take it to a joint select committee so that we become part of the policy formation which is not part of the functions of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] But I will go into the reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will go into the reasons why this is a failed document and it is, in a sense, taking it to a Joint Select Committee is essentially wasting our time in the context of the problems we face.

In the first place, Trinidad and Tobago's problem at this stage is not developing grand strategies, great documents, great ideas, it is fundamentally about implementation of the ideas. [*Desk thumping*] Since the 1980s, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been talking *ad nauseam* about the need for economic

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diversification away from oil and gas, *ad nauseam*, since A levels, the '80s, the '90s, 2000 and the Government has come into power and they have told us that they had great ideas, they were “red and ready” to diversify this economy.

We have waited with bated breath on this side and up to this point we have not had one single idea about how they are going to diversify the economy, whether it is tourism, they are not in a position to tell that it will take up 10 per cent of the slack or the shortfall in the energy sector, and therefore, we could have buy-in to this process. The problem why we are against this going to a joint select committee, in the first place, is because it does not speak to implementation, it speaks to grandiose ideas and [*Desk thumping*] and we are full and fed up of ideas in this society.

Secondly, Vision 2030 will not help us with the gamut of small problems we face. It is grand, it is architecture, but it does not deal with the specific problems we face and the problems which impede our development. For example, if our crime detection is under 10 per cent and if our people are being murdered daily, how are we or how will we achieve Vision 2030 and its first pillar which speaks about putting people first? Mr. Deputy Speaker, most of us will be dead by the time Vision 2030 comes into being, unless they deal with the 101 little problems that are more important than us sitting in a joint select committee, a joint select committee to discuss the grandiose ideas.

For example, and we could just take, on that side they speak about an “all of government” approach in solving the crime problem—[*Interruption*]—a whole-of-government, all of government, whole-of- government. But let us take one little area and there are thousands and I will just highlight one area to say, instead of going to a Joint Select Committee we should be putting our energies and our intellect to be solving those problems. At every level of our education system there is a gender imbalance in terms of the performance of males and females.

We look annually at the SEA results and we see out of the top 100, which they publish in the newspapers, a good 80 per cent of them are females. You go to secondary school and you look at the results, almost in every subject, including mathematics and science, and the females are over performing compared to the males. I taught at tertiary level, at university and at COSTAATT and in many of the classes which we were teaching, there would be a class of 25, there would be five males and about 20 females.

What in effect we are doing by spending all this money in the education system is creating dysfunctional families, highly educated women with men who are not able to relate to them intellectually or socially, given the difference in

education standards. That, our Prime Minister indicated that roughly a third of the murders in Trinidad and Tobago are family-related, spousal-related issues, issues relating to male-female relationships.

So, we could be talking great ideas, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we are going to be talking about putting people first, but if we create a dysfunctional family relationship, and those who study sociology will tell you that the family is the very foundation of a society, if we are creating dysfunctional families, and if we are not spending any time dealing with curriculum development and curriculum innovation to ensure that our males who end up in our prisons are treated, are given an education that is relevant and that they can relate to and perform, [*Crosstalk*] yes, and they could perform, we are spinning top in mud.

Our purpose on this side is not to waste time. We are about Trinidad—and as much as they say that they are patriotic, and I wish to say for Trinidad and Tobago to hear that every single one of the 18 of us are patriotic [*Desk thumping*] citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and our duty in the Opposition is to encourage our Government to create good legislation that will redound to the benefit of the citizens of the country. We will not rubber-stamp.

**Mr. Karim:** We are not missiles.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Correct. We will not rubber-stamp and we will not be railroaded to their timetables and to their outputs and their requirements. We are saying that there are—Trinidad and Tobago is facing a number of problems and to send this to a joint select committee, not dealing with the small problems that we should be spending time dealing with.

Little—for example, it does not take much genius to tell you that the time has come in Trinidad and Tobago where we must increase the qualifications, the entry qualifications for recruits into our police service. In New York, in NYPD, the entry qualification, a part they have some psychological tests and whatnot, psychometric tests, they also require them to have credits at tertiary education. Why can we not say that the time has come for us to have associate degrees to enter the police service in Trinidad? And I am sure that we will get a better graduate who could, a better recruit who could deal with the myriad of problems during his career.

**8.00 p.m.**

We have, for example, in COSTAATT, they train police officers, prison officers, fire officers in a two-year training programme—management training programme.

**Mr. Karim:** And the army officers.

**Mr. R. Charles:** And the officers.

**Mr. Karim:** Army officers.

**Mr. R. Charles:** And the army also. The bulk of persons who come to that course are in their early 50s, which means that as they graduate, they retire. You pay officers for two years, you give them increased knowledge and awareness, and then they retire. Why can we not—and I am talking about spending our time dealing with the simple problems of our society rather than grandiose ideas at a joint select committee. Why can we not at age 30 identify the persons who we want in the leadership cadre in the police, and army, et cetera, and send them to a training course, at age 30, so that the country would reap at least 25 years of payback for the education given to those officers? So, my view is that we are pitching—what they call?—top in mud, spinning top in mud by not dealing with the fundamental issues of our society. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Silence! Silence!

**Mr. R. Charles:** If we cannot supply gas to our energy-based industries, how are we going to achieve Goal IV of Vision 2030 which aspirationally speaks about Building Globally Competitive Businesses? So you see, the idea is to fool and hoodwink the society with a grand document that sounds nice, that says nothing, that speaks in no way to the plethora of problems that we face. [*Desk thumping*]

So, those are two reasons. The third reason why this document is a waste of time, in my view, is that it is esoteric and airy-fairy. It is pie in the sky. It ignores reality. On page 86, it talks about strengthening the office of Parliament. Strengthening the office of Parliament. But as we speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the PNM is making, in our view, a mockery of Parliament oversight mechanisms by insisting that important parliamentary oversight committees are chaired by PNM members, sworn to collective Cabinet responsibility in some areas. In essence, the Westminster system that we have inherited means that once you are a Member of Cabinet and a decision is made in Cabinet, you are bound to that decision. And, yet we have members of the Executive chairing parliamentary oversight committees. It gets a “lil” bad. It gets bad, when sometimes we are told that we have to get clearance from the Executive to find out whether in a parliamentary oversight committee we can discuss certain matters. And I speak—

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** That is not true.

**Mr. R. Charles:** I have *Hansard* records to state that.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Which one?

**Mr. R. Charles:** I have *Hansard* records to state that, where we are told—and there are members of that committee and they are listening and they are hearing—we have to go to the Executive to find out whether this parliamentary oversight committee can review actions of the Executive. It takes place in the Foreign Affairs Committee. Parliamentary Oversight Committees dealing with Foreign Affairs and National Security are examples.

So, instead of dealing with the plethora of problems we face: global terrorism, Financial Intelligence Units, our relationships with money laundering and dealing with those types of issues, we are dealing with issues that are not relevant to the big picture that would deal with Trinidad and Tobago's problems.

In the fourth place, Vision 2030 will fail because it is not consensually developed. And I could speak for the 40,000 persons who live in Naparima—who reside in the constituency of Naparima. They would like to be involved in a document that is going to determine the future of their country, and they would like to see whether their ideas are brought into play; they would like to see if their concerns are being incorporated into this document.

**Maj. Gen. Antoine:** 48(1).

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, there is a procedure. Kindly go ahead, Member for Naparima.

**Mr. R. Charles:** We are told that it goes to a joint select committee. I am not sure—well, there are Members here who would not be members of that committee, and therefore their constituents do not have a direct say into the development of the policy.

I would like to remind the members of the PNM, that in the days of Eric Williams, the founder of the party, I recall listening to the radio when you would hear Dr. Williams—it was meet the people—and we had the government radio station, and he would be talking to the—that was what we call Athenian democracy, where the leader of the country would speak to his [*Desk thumping*] citizenry and they would tell him first-hand what the problems are. What we have here is a situation where we call top-down leadership, top-down communications and top-down management, where they come and say we are in charge, these are the policies, these are the 10 commandments and you are to follow. And we dictate that you will do this via a joint select committee, and there is no other way, and our way is our way or the highway. And I wish to make the point, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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[*Brig. Gen. A. Antoine stands*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara, what is your—

**Brig. Gen. Antoine:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(1).

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Proceed.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Yes, I am barely giving the reasons why I am saying that this should not be part of the Joint Select Committee. [*Interruption*] So, what we are saying is that a document like this ought to be consensually developed.

My colleague, the Member for Caroni Central, quoted from a Jamaican newspaper where the issue came up that there is Jamaica's Vision 2030, and there was not enough buy-in by the Jamaican citizens into this document, and the same thing is going to happen in Trinidad. There was an article in the *Gleaner*, May 12, 2013, where a writer Ester Tyson, I think she is a sociologist, and she was saying that this document, Jamaica's Vision 2030, would fail. And my view is that our document will fail in a similar manner, and I quote—she says the real problem in Jamaica:

Vulgarity, barbarism, violence, paternal and maternal irresponsibility must become matters at which we become outraged and seek to change, so that our children can be given a fighting chance to become socially aware and responsibly conscious of what is the goal for society.

And it goes on and on. But what this is saying essentially is the mistake we make in Trinidad and Tobago and the mistake we make in the Caribbean, that the governments dictate and the society is supposed to follow. And the systems that we have are not conducive to getting the involvement of the rank and file of citizens of our country.

The fifth reason why this document will fail is because it ignores previous incarnations developed by other Governments. After all, the Member for Arouca/Maloney said that this document is a straight line, a linear continuation of the Vision 2020. So, the question I would like to ask is: What happened between 2010 and 2015? Why were the views or the ideas or the philosophies or the policies that emanated from that era, why do we not see anything in this document? Why is there a total absolute exclusion of any good that came out of that four years? I say that in the context of the need for consensus and the need for inclusion in the ideas.



So, what we find is that excellent and easily understandable ideas like the green economy—we are talking about the green economy that there is a debate in the United States at this moment where industries—the giants of industries are telling President Trump that be careful what you do with climate change because the United States stands to have a competitive advantage in industrial development and the provision of jobs, et cetera, and if we cede all that to the world, and the United States continues with a fossil-fuel economy.

So, in the United States they are talking about the green economy, the Europeans and the UN they talk to us. They were prepared to make funding available to countries like Trinidad and Tobago so that we could develop and incubate industries. But all of that green economy, not a word in this document. The whole world is talking about the green economy. It is manifestly absent in this document.

I have spoken previously about the silver economy, and the silver economy, and I will just restate it in a line, this document sees the silver economy as a burden on society that elderly and aged people will be a burden on the insurance and on the health sectors, and therefore they do not—and I challenge the Member for Arouca/Maloney to tell me where one idea, one job creation effort that is consistent with the requirements of the silver economy? And if she has an idea I will sit and let her tell me one job creation idea.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Your job, Member for Naparima. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** “Ooooooh.” [*Continuous desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, you asked a serious question rooted in economic development and we get a pejorative condescending response. So—

**Mr. Hinds:** Would the Member give way?

**Mr. R. Charles:** No, I will not! I will not! So that we wish to see this document speak not to the holistic comprehensive, and I use the word “architecture”; we could use areas inherent in this document to deal with the diversification of our economy and the improvement of our society, but they do not see it like that.

Lastly, Vision 2030 is a list of activities, and you tell us not to get into it. But hear what. Hear this. Putting people first, our greatest asset. Short-term goals, our society will be grounded in the principles of social justice. What does that mean? Anybody has an idea of being grounded in the principles of social justice? It is nice sounding words that mean nothing. Hear, as a medium-term goal persons

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living in absolute poverty will be reduced, by 2 per cent? Half per cent? One per cent? At the same time you speak about this, we know and I know in Naparima constituency, I could give them the names of 100 persons who in any reasonable person's judgment would be requiring and needy of a food card. Social support has been cut. There are young at-risk gentlemen fathers in prison, there is no whole-of-government, all-of-government to address their needs, so they will become problems in years to come.

This document a list of activities, and if you talk to anyone on that side, you ask them what is crime, they will tell you we are doing this, we have given cars, we have boats, we have this, but what they will never tell you is that we will reduce the entry of guns by 50 per cent in two years. They will never tell you that we will have a response time—if I, living in St. Joseph Village, San Fernando, were to call the Mon Repos police station and say there is a thief outside my house, as they do in New York, and in New Rochelle where I lived, within five minutes I was guaranteed a police officer in front of my house. In Trinidad and Tobago, they will never, they cannot, because they do not want to give targets. You know why? Because if they give a target I could come after one year and say, “This is the target, it has not been achieved. Tell me why.” But when you tell me that persons—

**Hon. Member:** Would the Member give way?

**Mr. R. Charles:** No, I will not—persons living in absolute—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Members, silence. Proceed, Member for Naparima.

**Mr. R. Charles:** When you tell me persons living in absolute poverty will be reduced, that is nothing. And no joint select committee is going to be in a position to put names, dates, times, and outputs to that document, and the long-term goal one to 15 years, poverty would be eradicated.

Well, I ask the question, how will a joint select committee help us to eradicate poverty in 15 years, given this Government, and its inability to perform and come up with ideas to create well-paid jobs for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? [*Desk thumping*] Who can they fool? Who can they fool? While they talking—and this is the problem we have with parliamentarians in Trinidad and Tobago. They have calypsos in the past where they say “Dey kicksin in Parliament”, et cetera. We, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, know the problems. We know that if you graduate from university you cannot get a job, and it has reached the stage that if you are a medical doctor, if you graduate in medicine you cannot get a job in Trinidad and Tobago. You know what kind of damage that does to the psychology of students who are now enrolled in tertiary education?

When I was at university, I knew that if I got a degree I had a job waiting for me. Eric Williams did that. What does his successors do? They gloss it over and they will tell you that nobody is fired. I have been in Parliament here and I asked a question and was told only 5,000 persons unemployed. Well, I could find 5,000 in four constituencies in South Trinidad. We know it. We know if you go in the hospital in Trinidad, jump high I say, jump low, you know that you are not going to get medicine. You know you might be able to—you might be put to sleep on a floor in San Fernando General Hospital, and if I go now with the Minister, I am sure, as we speak, there are persons lying on the floor in San Fernando General Hospital. There have been pictures in the papers. There have been pictures.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** When?

**Mr. R. Charles:** If I tell him that people have to wait four and five months for MRI he will gloss it over.

The fact of the matter is you can talk but you cannot fool the citizens, because they are feeling the [*Desk thumping*] vindictiveness of this PNM Government. A former Prime Minister who said this, “You hear vindictiveness, you hear evil, you hear vituperation”, and what we are hearing on that side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is not a willingness to engage us in a level of mutual respect. You hear terms like “shameless”, you hear terms like “unpatriotic”. You keep hearing “unpatriotic”, and I would like to say that I do not like to talk about myself [*Laughter*] but when I was in Canada on a government scholarship I could have remained. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Silence! Silence!

**Mr. R. Charles:** I could have remained in Canada as many of my friends. I came to Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] My “navel string bury” in Trinidad and Tobago, and as much as they feel this is PNM country, and only PNM can survive, and only PNM are patriotic, we on this side are equally if not more patriotic than those on that side. [*Desk thumping*]

So, we ask them to do what is necessary. Do what they are paid to do. Do what they promise Trinidad and Tobago. I would like to go back to the spinning of the wheel. When I spun the wheel, everything I said was true. It came to pass. Every single thing. [*Desk thumping*] I said that they were going to increase the price of gasoline, it came to pass. I told them that they were going to cut GATE—your gate—and it came to pass. I told them that they were going to stop the rapid rail, and in the fullness of time it also came to pass. I told them that poverty would increase—

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[*Brig. Gen. Antoine stands*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara.

**Brig. Gen. Antoine:** 48(1), Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. R. Charles:** I told them that poverty would increase. He does not like to hear it.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, address the Chair, please.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Yes. I told them that poverty would increase, and it came to pass. So that it was like a crystal ball predicting the future, but as you come—[*Crosstalk*—they cannot deal with the facts. They are not fact-based. They deal with the messenger, they deal with ad hominem arguments. They do not deal with factual—[*Continuous desk thumping*—because the facts will show that this is the worst Government in the history of Trinidad and Tobago in terms of performance. [*Desk thumping*]

And this fooling us. Vision 2020, the population voted against it. Vision 2030, I hereby predict that in the fullness of time that this document will also be rejected by the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

[*Dr. R. Moonilal and Hon. F. Al-Rawi stand*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I recognize the Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East):** Thank you. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, it may well have to do with my agility. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would be very brief. Just a few remarks I want to make on this Motion before us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to assure you that it is not my intention to go into the details of the document, because I really did not read it, so even if I wanted to, I could not get into the details. And I did not read it for two reasons. First, I had a hunch that the interpretation would be that we would not be allowed to delve into the report given the way the Motion was drafted. And secondly, when I began to look at the document, of course I looked for certain areas I was interested in, and the pages were unnumbered. They were not numbered and it became very cumbersome and I just gave up at that point. So, I have not read the document so I will confine my few remarks really to the Motion and the process that the Government intends to take.

I would begin by asking just a few questions in sincerity. I am not sure, and I stand to be corrected, whether or not the Vision 2020 document also went to a joint select committee of Parliament in the period. I believe not, so it did not go. I am not sure if any other development plan, whether it was called a vision plan or a

development plan—there was a time in the early '60s, governments would have a five-year development plan—Dr. Williams had—and as the Government changed you have another five-year development plan and so on. Maybe the Member for Arima, who would have been on the compound at that time, could tell us whether those plans also went to a joint select committee. I think not.

And, it is leading me to a proposition which I would like the Government to reflect on. There is to me a fundamental departure in the governance approach of this Government, for better or for worse. It may be for better. But there is a departure with this administration that from Dr. Eric Williams come down did not take, and it has to do with the way government is structured in our Westminster parliamentary process. The Member for Chaguanas West, I think, was also on that line, that there is a structure of government, there is a particular approach to conduct the business in our political model, and this goes against the grain of that.

While I heard of the Jamaica story, I do not know it, and it may well be that we need to hear more of Jamaica, and maybe elsewhere where this has been done. I would just raise a few questions: Apart from the very simple fact that they say 2016 to 2030, it cannot be 2016, we are in 2017. When this committee may finish its work, it may well be 2018. So, you are doing a development plan of 2018 to 2030. So, it simply cannot be. We are in May 2017 and we are asked to reflect on a development plan for 2016, so that is a smaller issue.

But, to my knowledge, when a matter goes to the Joint Select Committee, the Joint Select Committee—and I have sat over the years on many Joint Select Committee, chaired, particularly when I have been in Opposition, and chaired by very now prominent Members of the Government. In Government I did not sit on many, one or two. So, when a matter goes to a joint select committee generally but not always it is a Bill that is going to the Joint Select Committee for reflection, further work, consensus building. Sometimes it may be a policy document. It may be a policy document or a report, it goes.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to my knowledge of the working of Parliament—and we have here in this room, I counted one there, I think we have about 300 years of experience in this room and this Chamber at this time. Not in one person. But, when a report comes from a joint select committee, I believe it is a publication, and the paternity of that report is of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] It is not of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

So, we are doing a report right now. Well, we are doing work on cybercrime, we are doing work on gaming, we are doing work on child development. We are doing work. A joint select committee has a life of its own, and they operate within the confines of the Standing Orders, they can do what they want within their terms of

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reference. But what they produce is really a document, a report that belongs to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. So a simple question to begin now is, when—assuming this goes to a joint select committee, the Joint Select Committee meets, reflects on this document before us. A report is made. Let us assume we run to the end; a process, and a report is made. Is that report the report of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago or a report of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago? I argue it is the latter. Let us go one step further now. When this report comes to Parliament, it may well have a minority report. All joint select committees are—people are entitled to do minority reports, and I think there is also a precedent where, I am not sure, you could have maybe two or more minority reports depending on the views of Members.

When this report comes with a minority report or not, it comes to the House. Is the Government saying that when the report comes from the Joint Select Committee to the Parliament floor, the Government will implement the parliamentary report on their development strategy or Vision 2030? Who is implementing that? Who? It cannot be the Parliament. The Parliament is not an operational Ministry. The Parliament is not a department of the Government that way. It is a separate independent institution with a specific mandate. I ask this simple question: Who is implementing Vision 2030 when it is produced by the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago now? [*Desk thumping*] Because when you go to a joint select committee the report of the committee with its amendments, and change, and so on, is a report of the Parliament.

**Mr. Hinds:** It is the recommendations.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Okay, fine. Okay, well, we have clarity now. The recommendations coming from the Joint Select Committee are implemented by the Government. The only implementer here is the Government. It is not the Parliament, it is not the Opposition, and it is not the Independents. So, you want to get what Parliament is saying and then you implement. That is very instructive. The Government intends to implement from the Parliament.

Now, what happens in our structure of government is that you come into office. When you come into office, almost automatically you have your manifesto which becomes Government policy, and you begin to implement. It may well be that you also have a development strategy that your Cabinet approve—and I have confirmed that this has been approved by the current Cabinet—and you begin to implement. And then your policy monitoring unit, both at the Prime Minister's office and possibly in the Ministry of Planning and Development as well—they should have well-staffed policy monitoring units—you then measure your Cabinet

work and your parliamentary work by the implementation of your manifesto and your development plan. That is how the experience has been for several governments. I had the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to actually work in the Office of the Prime Minister as Director of Policy Monitoring. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Under Mr. Panday.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Under the then Prime Minister, Mr. Panday. And I had the benefit of getting information on the Government that went before, which is the Mr. Manning's first administration. He also had a structure for policy monitoring. They would monitor Cabinet decision, parliamentary decision, but, in keeping with the PNM—well, the PNM before, the party manifesto and the development strategy adopted by the Cabinet. That is how you monitor.

Because, you see, the United National Congress or any other Opposition, to you, has its own development plan. We have our manifesto where we will be working on development plans and programmes to go to the electorate, to tell the electorate to vote for us, this is our plan. So that it cannot be that an opposition goes to work with the government in the Parliament on development planning strategy independent that way of itself, of the parties, of the government. That does not work in our system. In our system you come with your development strategy, you come with your manifesto, you enter office and you begin to implement.

Look at the problem we have now with the time frame. This matter, and I will just run through quickly. As we know, the Second Session, Eleventh Parliament ends in a few weeks. The Government is right, they know by a procedure they can extend the work of this committee, they can continue next session, which I think is the Third Session, Eleventh Parliament.

**8.30 p.m.**

This is a cross-sectional document; it is meant to be a comprehensive development plan. This is not a specific area of health or crime or cybercrime or something. This is a national development strategy, cross-sectoral, reflecting every area of policy and analytic work.

When the joint select committee works on this, you are looking at November 2017. I told you before, the recess comes, the budget comes. That budget is September and October. Parliament in a real sense will begin in November. November come, is Christmas. When Christmas finish, is Carnival. And this is every area. I mean, just going through the table of contents, because this is a national strategy, so it is almost in every area. When you begin this work, it is November 2018, January and so on.

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It may be that the joint select committee decide, listen, whatever has been done by the Government before, I assume they had widespread consultation on this, we would like to meet with civil society; the trade unions; the business community; the churches; the youth groups; the women organizations; the environmental groups, because we want an input, as a joint select committee is entitled to, into this national development strategy. This happens in 2018.

Let us, for all intents and purposes, assume that it takes six months to do that. By mid-2018, we come back to the Parliament with a report or a minority report. When is this Government implementing Vision 2030? In 2019. Then, you have 24 months or 18 months before a general election. Another party—the UNC comes into power. We look at this document and say, waste of time, throw this away. We have our own development plan, it is called our manifesto and our development strategy, Member for Caroni Central and others will be working on a development strategy. This goes in the dustbin. You have wasted possibly 100 hours of Parliament time. You have wasted the time of Ministers. You have wasted the time of Opposition Members. It does not work this way. I know, maybe you mean well, but it does not work this way. This is the business of the Government and your political party, the People's National Movement, that you are proud of. This is your business. Put your plan and implement your plan and be measured by the delivery of your plan. [*Desk thumping*]

As I said before, you cannot subcontract the work of your Government to Parliament that way. They came into office in 2015, red and ready, and by mid-2017, they say come, bring the whole Parliament together, we want to know what to do. This is what is happening here. This is why, if you look at the history of this country, and I have not looked with the greatest detail, I suspect that we have never had a joint select committee for a national development plan, I suspect, because it is not workable in our political system.

By now you should have passed this in your Cabinet late in 2015 and had two implementation reports for 2016 and 2017 as to how far you have reached, [*Desk thumping*] because you will spend all your time in Government analyzing and paralyzing—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Analysis paralysis.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Analysis paralysis. When are you going to implement this?—with six months to go before a general election. The next party, the UNC comes into power, throw it in the dustbin and then the other problem you have is when you go to the election you will tell the national community vote for us on the basis of our Vision 2030, eh. Do not forget, this is Vision 2030. When you go,



Members for Arima and San Fernando East, to the electorate and you tell them vote for us on the basis of 2030, what did the Opposition say, vote for us on the basis of 2030 too? We are part of that? You cannot do that. And when you are rejected, assuming you are rejected, because I do not want to make this a platform speech, assuming you are rejected in 2030 that means your plan has been rejected. An incoming Government cannot implement your plan because that was rejected, thrown out by the electorate. This is why when we came in 2010, the Vision 2020 was there, but the country said no to that.

There are Members opposite when they spoke on the political platform in 2010, they were in praise of Vision 2020 and calling upon people to vote for them because they have this plan and this is the plan that we are going to implement. By virtue of your defeat, that plan went with your defeat. So if and when this Government, I mean, I do not want to be heavily platform here, but if and when your Government is removed from office, your 2030 goes with you. And the next team coming in is entitled to have their development strategy and their—so are you telling us that you will meet us to plan a common manifesto for the election? Is that what you are saying? We will meet to make a manifesto for the two of us. It cannot work, these things do not happen in combative adversarial, Westminster politics. You get your plan and implement your plan and you will be judged by the implementation of your development strategy. [*Desk thumping*] You will be judged. And I want to say something for the record because people misquote me and misinterpret it and they are fine to do that for political purposes.

A joint select committee has an important role to play in our system. They are not talk shops. It is meant to deal with primarily, but not always, legislation, amendment, critical pieces of law, comprehensive and complex Bills will go to a joint select committee, it is a very important institution. You are going to set up the number 17, I think number 18 now, because a Motion was passed earlier, number 18 joint select committee to have this comprehensive, in terms of table of contents, eh, in terms of table of contents, comprehensive JSC, where every institution in this country could find themselves in Parliament to be consulted. You are going to appoint Members of both sides including Ministers. You know, I find myself now appealing to Ministers opposite not to waste time as if you know they are my colleagues in that way. They are not my colleagues in that way.

I am appealing to colleagues opposite not to waste time, get along with the business of managing their Ministry. I mean, sea bridge fall down, challenge in hell, challenge in education, challenge in national security. I mean, when I see the Member for Point Fortin have to spend hours in the morning at Joint Select

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Committees, when is he managing his Ministry? He has a constituency that is on his back demanding goods and services. The Member for Arima as well, a constituency demanding goods and services and you spend your hours in the morning, not in your Ministry or in your constituency office, but in a joint select committee listening to people coming in and talking for hours and hours and hours on matters that I do not think are properly or politically meant to be before a joint select committee.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is multi-sectoral. About 20 Ministries they have in that—

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** It is multi-sectoral. This will encompass about all the Ministries of Government. So the Member for Moruga/Tableland complaining about landslips. Now everything slipping away around you, but his constituents are adamant. His constituents are on his back, you put on the TV and he is under some pressure. He should be in touch with all the delivery Ministries to help the poor people in Moruga/Tableland, the good people up there. We were up there for a Monday night forum I think a few weeks ago and the stories we heard about him, he needs all the time in the world to spend in his constituency. [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is not “lovel” anymore, it is “hatel”.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** One person said it was “hatel” and we had to temper him down. In fact we had to calm down a gentleman up there. So you, the Member for Moruga/Tableland ought not to be spending hours of his time in parliamentary Joint Select Committee where there is no law making, this is not about making a law, this is not about amending a Bill, this is not a complex piece. The work of your Government is to propose a development strategy and implement it. [*Desk thumping*] The work of the Parliament is to make law and the Government is on this—the Government is now changing the roles of the game. And is it that they want to avoid taking responsibility? [*Desk thumping*]

They want to avoid taking responsibility for making policy. I mean, we do not praise people here, but the former Member for San Fernando East, you know, whatever you say about him when he stood up and say I have a plan, I am doing A, B and C, the heavens could fall he doing it, you know. You could come to Parliament and shout and scream, “he tell you he doing something, he not bringing no joint select committee, you know. He have ah plan to do something, he do he plan” and he would say when I go to the electorate the people would judge me on my work. And the people did judge him on his work. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Laventille West. Member!

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** The Member for Laventille West is getting excited. [*Crosstalk*] But there is no need for his excitement. This is a very stable debate.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Proceed.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Yes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was saying that the former Member for San Fernando East and former Prime Minister—[*Crosstalk*]—again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have to intervene. The Member for Laventille West, I do not know what he ate.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, I have spoken already and I have told you to proceed. You proceed, Sir.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is disturbing me.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I will determine—

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I need your help.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Oropouche East, I will determine accordingly as I have been doing since I have been in the Chair here. Proceed.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was making that the former Member for San Fernando East and Prime Minister understood the nature of this Government. As the former Member for Couva North, when he was Prime Minister and as the Member for Siparia, we would not stop the implementing projects and programmes and so on by going to a joint select committee to ask everybody what they feel. Because a joint select committee is not to consult with Members of the Opposition and the Independents alone, it is to consult with the whole world. You are now going to stop, mash brakes on your development strategy to say we want to talk to the world to find out what to do. This is a confession. This here is a confession of your incompetence and your failure to deliver. [*Desk thumping*]

The Members opposite will stand up after me and say, look at them, they always asking for consultation. We are going into a joint select committee now they do not want to go. That is what they thought. But consultation for us is on complex Bills, on criminal law legislation, on serious business of the House, it cannot be on your PNM national development strategy. This is a document emanating from their Government and emanating from their party. We have our own. We do not want to consult you on it. We will take it to the population and on the basis of that seek a mandate. [*Desk thumping*] That is the point I am making.

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Now if you wanted, I will give you the process again. If you wanted to hear the views of the Parliament, either here or in the other place, there is a simple way. You file a Government Motion and ask the Parliament to consider and note the contents of our National Development Strategy 2016/2030, simple. And we have a debate and you will find out from the Members our view and if we have ideas to give to you, I do not give them ideas anymore, but there are some who will give ideas, if we have some policy suggestions we make it. But do not detain the Opposition, the Independent Members and certainly not use the Parliament to go to the national community on your National Development Strategy. That is the business of the Government and to my respectful view there is a fundamental flaw in the understanding and interpretation of the role of Government in our Westminster parliamentary political model. There is a fundamental problem here. It cannot be by 2018/2019 you approve a developmental strategy for 2016 to 2030. Then your Government is not getting back in power. The next Government throw it in the bin with haste.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, Member, you have been on the same point for the last, probably 15 minutes. So again, could you probably move on and tie up this one, because you are coming back to the same tedious repetition, on the same point, all right.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Sure. Mr. Deputy Speaker, all I could leave it there at the minute is to say I hope the Government understands at least what I am saying. It is not necessary for them to agree with me, but they can understand surely the concern I have as to the approach they are taking on this critical matter, all right. And really that is all I really wanted to say. Thank you.

**The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi):** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had not quite intended to join this debate but I am compelled, in light of the contributions of the Members from Naparima and Oropouche East, to make a short intervention.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a serious Motion before this House which, in a nutshell, is the establishment of a joint select committee for the purposes of looking at the Vision 2030 document. We heard the Member for Oropouche East, in-between his laughter at his own jokes, yet again; in-between the boorish commentary, yet again; in-between these events, you know, perhaps in another place I will describe my real views of the Member for Oropouche East, but for now I will just say, there is a habit of contribution that the Hon. Member adopts, which is basically to mock everything that is put forward, he puts it forward in the most trivial and base mechanisms possible and he is entitled to do that. I mean,

after all, he has today described, the hon. Member, what he believes an Opposition's role is. He said several times today, "The next Government come they go throw it in the dustbin. Heh, heh, heh." I heard him say that over and over again, punctuated by the laughter, over and over at his own submissions, but in all seriousness, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that may be the Member for Oropouche East's view on how a Parliament works.

You see, respectfully, when last, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the last seven years, have we seen a green paper produced by a Government? A white paper produced by a Government? I was quite astounded in the legislative work that we are doing in Government to look at the Jamaican experience and see the number of work products that come out of the Jamaican experience, green papers, white papers. For the listening population, a green paper is a statement of government policy in its primary and preliminary stages. It may be multiple in direction with various policies. When it is worked upon, and there is more effort on to it, it then becomes a white paper as a closer expression of policy.

But when in Jamaica, and when traversing thorny issues of how the Jamaican population and Parliament and Opposition and Government got through what in Trinidad and Tobago seems to be a constitutional dilemma, my counterparts in Jamaica answered me by saying, are you serious that in Trinidad and Tobago you cannot pass X Bill or Y Bill? And then they said to me, we in Jamaica agree upon policy, Government and Opposition, whilst we are on different sides of the fence and that is how we pass law. They said to me that they pass law, as my learned colleague is saying, for the good of the country, but they put the analogy this way. They said they fly the plane while they are building it.

They passed a law in Jamaica called MOCA, the Major Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency, an agency that Government and Opposition agreed to while they were both in the same Westminster, same Whitehall model that Trinidad and Tobago operates under, the Jamaican antagonism in politics is known to be a serious antagonism, gunplay, violence, difficulty plagues their society, much like ours, but there in Jamaica, their own parliamentarians in heartfelt polar opposite views could sit down, Government and Opposition and agree upon positions which are thorny issues. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member for Oropouche East comes in his usual comedy to tell us, "Well, when we come into power we go throw it in the dustbin". I mean, when you understand the mind set of your opponents it makes it quite clear what one intends by way of progress. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a fact, several Bills have seen, several proposals have seen, several legislative measures have seen, several policy measures have seen, introduction into Parliament.

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In this country, in the year 2002, a PNM Government embarked upon a National Development Strategy which bore fruit in a multi-sectoral documentation exercise in 2005 which then saw a document called Vision 2020 laid in the Parliament in 2006. They did not go the further step of having a joint select committee, but I am compelled to put history on the record now. We have been told as a nation and the PNM party knows it for sure, Franklin Khan, then sitting as Chairman of the Party in Opposition, received a call from the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development under its then Minister, under a UNC Government saying, we are about to throw away Vision 2020, we are going to dump it—somebody in the office felt that it was good work and said look, it is a shame to throw this in the “labasse”, please come and collect the documentation.

Mr. Khan had to go down, collect the documentation, all CDs, all documents, all work, et cetera, collect the Vision 2020 work which the Member for Caroni Central himself participated in. The Member for Caroni Central came here today and said that the work that he did must have been thrown away or put on to a shelf. He is right. His own Government, when sitting in Government were prepared to dump the work of a multi-sectoral committee and therefore, the Member for Caroni Central was correct.

So why do we come here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker? What is the purpose today? The Member for Oropouche East believes in any party that he is a Member of, obviously, there will never be agreement, Westminster and Whitehall cannot make for productive work. I do not share the same view as the Member for Oropouche East. You know why? I served in Opposition for five years. And whilst I served in Opposition for five years I contributed, as my colleagues did, to many a Bill that the Government piloted, neck and neck, side by side. We saw good law created even when we came to Parliament and the entire Independent Bench said, no, there was the PNM, loyal Opposition, voting with the Government to say this is good law, let us do it. And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, makes an entire tragedy of the comedy offered to us by the Member for Oropouche East, yet again.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And any policy came?

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** And what did we say—yes, did any policy come? My learned friend, Dr. Gopeesingh, the Member for Caroni East forgets. He chaired a joint select committee—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The what?

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** The Hon. Member chaired a joint select committee for public procurement and what went to the public procurement first joint select committee were two diametrically opposed policies for consideration and it was after two years of going nowhere in that policy consideration that the PNM Opposition insisted that the Government elect one of the two policies. And we even suggested that they elect a hybrid of the position. But the rationale inside of this Motion is really something that is quite certain.

Hon. Members may stand and say, well look, yes, it is true, legislative proposals may be different from policies on national developmental strategy, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, bearing in mind the history on the Vision 2020 where a UNC Government was prepared to throw the work into the “labasse”, the one thing that was missing from laying Vision 2020 in the Parliament in 2006 is that the document as laid in the Parliament does not bite into the records of *Hansard* and joint select committees in the way that a joint select committee will allow. And it is not true that joint select committees are just Opposition and Government. Opposition, Government and Independents under Standing Order 111 of our Standing Orders and under Standing Order 112 of our Standing Orders and also under Standing Order 114 of our Standing Orders, allows for the public intervention and therefore no Government henceforth will be in a position to simply dumped material in a dustbin or in the “labasse” if you enter the halls of a joint select committee.

Now let me make another point. The fact that the work is in a joint select committee does not mean that the work itself cannot proceed. We dealt with that a short while ago in terms of the Welch Report, but in relation to this particular report, the Vision 2020, now 2030 report, the fact is that you can at the same time whilst you broaden the consultative input through members of the public, through work of the joint select committee which under our Standing Orders can see the calling for witnesses, inviting of commentary, placing on the Parliament website, looking at legislative proposals, while all of that larger intellectual fulmination that the Member for Caroni Central spoke about is afoot, you of course have the opportunity to conduct the implementation of your work. [*Desk thumping*]

Now, the Hon. Member forgets, the Member for Oropouche East and other Members, they forget that the work of a committee does not stymie the implementation and so I can tell you for certain that the Ministry of Planning and Development has a tracking and monitoring unit. The Government’s proposal accepted by its Cabinet is now policy, accepted government policy, is the Vision 2030 and that allows us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to allow the Ministry of Planning and Development to implement its product.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is method in execution, there is method in putting the work into Parliament for all time, there is method in allowing a breadth of opportunity for persons to contribute all of which are captured by this joint select committee, all of which. But I heard the Member for Naparima speaking, exasperated as he often is, in the middle of his contributions, quite passionate in his contributions. Sometimes I worry for him. It appears as if he needs a bit of oxygen while he is on the trot, but nonetheless. We heard the Member for Naparima thundering out a number of issues. We heard him say that there were six reasons why this thing could never see the light of day, the Vision 2030, why a joint select committee would be inappropriate for it.

The Member for Naparima said that there was need for clarity in the approach. He said that Trinidad and Tobago would get nothing out of this purpose. He said, show me something on your purposes. Show me on what is being implemented. Basically show me the focus on what he calls, “the small matters”. He said, instead of occupying joint select committee time let us talk about terrorism, money laundering, financial intelligence unit, he wanted to know about all of those things. I want to know if the Member for Naparima even bothers to read the Order Paper, because the Order Paper has right there standing on it, Financial Intelligence Unit, proceeds of crime, anti-terrorism, it is on the Order Paper. [*Desk thumping*] The Hon. Member asked for it. It just requires a little bit of reading, a little bit of interpretation.

Right now in Trinidad and Tobago we have the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force Forum going on at the Hyatt next door. Whilst the Opposition pours scorn on the Government, the 25 member basin is in open compliment for Trinidad and Tobago at the work that we have done as a country to lead us into the charge against money laundering and financing of terrorism. Trinidad and Tobago leads that pack and we do not lead it by work in talk alone.

When one comes in to the Chair of an Attorney General, in September 2015 and you meet zero listings, zero activity under anti-terrorism and in one year you take it to 341, you deal with seizure of assets, you create an anti-terrorism desk, the rest of the world can give you a compliment. But today the Member for Naparima says, let us focus on what he calls “the small stuff”. Well, no, Sir, it is not small stuff for us, it is big stuff and the work is being done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we heard the Hon. Member ask us to show him about what is going on with tourism and the diversification. Let me categorize in terms of implementation of a plan, because they come up with this saying, “oh, you are red and ready, you are in charge now, you have no plan”. First of all let me put it



into context with the greatest of respect. When you come to deal with execution of ongoing projects as a new Government and you witness estimations for projects which are massively overpriced, ridiculously organized, full of corruption, what do you do? Do you just automatically start it? Do you roll into Maracas Bay where the beach is a disaster zone, where you are watching a contract close to \$100 million, you are seeing a car park supposed to pay for, tens of millions of dollars and you know that the price could be done for \$500,000. Do you award the contract? Do you run with the contract? Do you take that same project where a waste water treatment or sewage treatment plant at that particular site should cost maybe 10 million, you watch it for \$23 million and just say go ahead?

**9.00 p.m.**

Do you take a regional complex, estimated 12,000 square foot of regional complex, estimated at \$128 million, when you know it could be built for \$12 million? You see, what you do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the first thing you do is you make sure you reorganize the expenditure, recheck the expenditure, bring it down to proper values and then you implement. [*Desk thumping*] But the implementation that hon. Members complained about has been stymied by the fact that we were suffering, for the last 19 months, by a 95 per cent drop in our revenue. US \$2.5 billion dollars per year were not brought to account because it did not hit the books of Trinidad and Tobago because it was tax write-off. And therefore your first priority is saving your employees, your public service, preservation of jobs.

We heard the Member for Naparima boasting about his wheel-spinning. He wants to go back to wheel-spinning, the hon. Member said. He said taxes would go up; price of gas would go up. He said GATE would be cut. He said that he was a man who could foresee the future. Well, obviously, the Member for Naparima could have foreseen some of those things. Because, if you know, in the cloistered bosom of the UNC that “yuh buss the bank; yuh take all de money; yuh make sure the projects are over-increased”; that you took two years of tax write-offs to come to bear in the very next position; [*Desk thumping*] you know that the country will have no money; you know that you have been downgraded by Standard & Poor’s and you kept it quiet; you refused to let the IMF Article IV Consultation happen; you “duck” them before the election, no wonder the Member for Naparima was spinning the wheel because he knew what his own Government will have to deal with. And that, most respectfully, is intellectual dishonesty at its highest. [*Desk thumping*]

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Hon. Members want to know about a plan. Well, let us talk about the plans that are right there being actioned right now. They joke about tourism. They tell us do not do Sandals. Sandals this, Sandals that. “Scandal”, they started to call it, hon. Members. You know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The Tourism Development Company, in its day in Trinidad and Tobago, spends about 1 per cent of the revenue that Sandals spends on its international marketing. When Sandals markets globally, Trinidad and Tobago cannot even afford that form of marketing in the fashion conducted previously by the TDC. And when you invite a major player like Sandals, willing to come in a developmental policy—

**Dr. Tewarie:** 48(1).

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Overruled. Proceed.

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** I am answering Members in case—

**Dr. Tewarie:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I ask you a question?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** No.

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When you look at the position and the request for diversification raised by the Member of Naparima—I know he is hard to listen to. Maybe the Member for Caroni Central does not listen to the Member for Naparima, but I am answering the Member for Naparima. When you raised this position of development, obviously, when you have a plan for a major international like Sandals to come to Tobago, you are talking diversification and jobs, and your economy. And when you see a Government having already identified the land, transferred the land to the state enterprises sector; that is execution of policy on the trot. And when you hear of a port being developed at Toco and the highway going there so that your sea bridge fiasco, brought about because of a poor maintenance schedule for umpteen years prior to 2016, when you bring that to bear and you notice that you are solving the transportation issues between Toco and Scarborough, that is development. [*Desk thumping*]

But it is no different from the development that we are doing on the criminal justice side. And when you talk about elimination of 100,000 cases in motor vehicles and road traffic offences, elimination of preliminary enquiries, introduction of plea bargaining, experimentation with judge-only trials, when you are talking about the manpower audit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the small stuff that the Member for Naparima called it, when you are talking about a complete architectural overhaul to make sure the system works, that is

implementation of policy, set out in the Vision 2030 document. But I am demonstrating that you do not need to wait for the joint select committee's work. You can implement at the same time, as the Ministry of Planning and Development is tracking.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the implementation in respect of children is afoot. The operationalization of the Children's Authority, the implementation of the Children and Family Division Bill which became an Act which amended 18 pieces of law, which saw proclamation on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, 2017, which has seen the acquiring of two courts—those courts are earmarked to be opened in September and the launching will happen, God willing, in June this month—and you add that on to the creation of a Child Protection Unit at the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and you add that on to the Child Advocate at the Attorney General's Office, you are talking implementation of policy for gender and family, and children protection and quality of life at the same time that the Vision 2030 document goes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you see an implementation of that kind under "Children", you also have the opportunity to reverse an absolute obscenity on the part of the UNC, where a UNC Attorney General can proclaim laws—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Mr. AG, I have given you some leeway in terms of responding directly to the Member for Naparima, but I think now you are bordering on some additional points that you are now bringing into the debate. You talked about the Children's Authority and now you are talking about the AG and so on. So bring it tight, tie it in and let us see how it goes.

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** I am speaking in the debate and I am guided by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am answering the implementation of policy at the same time that a joint select committee to consider policy is going on, and I am giving life to the argument that they are not mutually exclusive, [*Desk thumping*] or that they can be mutually exclusive depending upon the philosophical approaches that one takes.

You see, the argument coming squarely from my learned colleagues opposite is that you cannot implement and that you will have to wait until the joint select committee product is done. You heard the Member for Oropouche East go chapter and verse; the Member for Caroni Central go chapter and verse, that you cannot have this thing go ahead because it makes a nonsense of policy. And I am demonstrating to the hon. Members by hard facts of implementation of policy right now, challenged by the hon. Members, Member for Naparima in particular, to demonstrate how this could be done. I am showing the people of Trinidad and

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Tobago what is happening right now and disproving their arguments. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was making the point that this policy implementation contained in the Vision 2030 document, as a general rubric, can cure the obscenity of a UNC Attorney General proclaiming laws whilst in government and then going to court to complain to the court and ask for damages that the law was badly proclaimed. I mean, no dignity in office and certainly no dignity after office.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hear the Hon. Member for Naparima constantly talk about Singapore. Well, I want to add on to the table, Shanghai. I want to add the People's Republic of China and their approach to policy. Do you know that in Shanghai there is an actual physical developed space in the Ministry of Planning where every project that is going to be built is built as a mock version, a miniature version of the entire city as built and what will be built, based upon policy, in real time? That is why, when you go to Shanghai, it appears to be a city from out of space, urban development at its best, planning at its best.

But whilst in China they will tell you, whilst in Shanghai they will tell you, this came about by an agreement on policy for development. And what is wrong with that? As a Minister of Planning past, the hon. Member for Caroni Central will know, we have seen Bills come about for the reform of planning. How long, hon. Member, has the master plan for Trinidad and Tobago been outstanding? The answer is since 1986. Right? 1986, 1996, 2006, 2016, four decades nearly, depending upon where you start or stop, and the master plan is still not developed. Well, taking a bite of policy, in consideration and fulmination as this, allows for development of better policy. The areas of implementation are so broad. We have dealt with so much, and this Vision 2030 document talks about the movement away from the plantation economy and into the oil and gas sector.

But let me give one last example, before I wrap up, of the implementation of policy, at the same time while one can plan in a joint select committee, or improve. I would like to pay an open compliment to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Rowley. On coming into office, this Government met a depletion in natural gas reserves. We had a 20 to 30 per cent shortfall at the Point Lisas Estate. Industries and companies were folding up by the day, leaving Trinidad and Tobago because they had plant shutdowns, exposure to billions of dollars. The fastest and quickest fix for our gas was to go and speak to the internationals, and one of those internationals, Shell—

**Mr. Lee:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1). I am trying to understand where the Attorney General is going with this.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Again, Hon. Members, as I mentioned previously, as the Speaker I will determine the extent of it. So I am hearing the point and then I will enquire of him to tie it in. Kindly proceed.

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** Yes. Well, I said clearly that the policy of implementation—and I am dealing with the last point of implementation which is mutually exclusive to planning, and I am speaking about the oil and gas resurgence in Trinidad and Tobago led by the Hon. Prime Minister, [*Desk thumping*] and it is not so much more than the realities of what the Member for Naparima called the small things, just getting it done.

So when you go and you get the Venezuelan government to agree to supply gas onshore to Trinidad and Tobago, that is a huge development to keep plants and industries here. [*Desk thumping*] But more particularly, when you choose the right entity in the form of Shell to have those conversations with, and then when you read the newspapers and you realize that Shell has just acquired all of the assets of Chevron in Trinidad and Tobago, including its share in Loran-Manatee for US \$250 million, you realize that the Prime Minister was way ahead of the curve. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** Strategic thinking.

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** Strategic thinking. Not only Dragon gas with Shell, not only the next field next to it, not only the implementation, making sure that you are giving rivalry between competing interests—

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

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:**—but you see that policy comes alive, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Mr. AG, tie it in. Move on to the next point.

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** I just did. Policy comes to life, Hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, disturbed as he may be at the fact that one does not need to adopt UNC Opposition-style politics, that one can contribute in joint select committee in a productive and informed way, that one does not have to be cloistered and constrained in one's thinking to think that you must await the outcome of a joint select committee and that you cannot implement at the same time; that short-sighted, wheel-spinning, oxygen-in-need-of-breathing type of thinking, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is when you get so exasperated that you have to laugh at your own comments and your own contribution, as the Member for Oropouche East is wont to do.

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So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, most respectfully, there is rhyme and rhythm and logic in the approach to a joint select committee. No one in this country will ever have to suffer the indignity of material being thrown into a dustbin or at the La Basse. It will be sealed in the records of the Parliament and on its *Hansard* in joint select committee for time immemorial.

I thank you for the opportunity to contribute. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I recognize the Member for Chaguanas East. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Fazal Karim (Chaguanas East):** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make a short intervention on the Motion before us. I also want to congratulate my colleagues on this side who have spoken on this Motion. When we look at Vision 2030, the document itself—and I am not going to go into the report. The document itself—[*Interruption*] and the Attorney General, I am being advised as well, I have listened to him—

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** “Doh follow dem bad advice, eh.”

**Mr. F. Karim:** The document itself admits in the very opening paragraph of the Executive Summary that Vision 2030 is Vision 2020, plus renewable energy, plus climate change. For me, and for us, this is really a mathematical equation that we are seeing. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to—my colleague made reference to the fact that we have the document, or the policy as it is being said here to us is being described in three phases: short-term, 2016 to 2020; medium-term, 2016 to 2025 and long-term, 2016 to 2030. The question is—and we have heard from our Attorney General that so much is being done and so much is documented in terms of implementation and that implementation continues in spite of what we are doing, and being sent to a joint select committee. And therefore my question is: If implementation is going on, why do you want to delay any further implementation by sending it to a joint select committee?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the time has come for us to stop the blaming and start the working. [*Desk thumping*] I think people are very much concerned. Many of them would have heard about Vision 2020, and we are being told that Vision 2030 is an advancement of Vision 2020. And the document itself also, when you read it, will tell you that it forms the fundamental basis—2030 that is—for 2020 after approximately, or as they would have said when the Member for Arouca/Maloney spoke, 80 consultations, 28 subcommittees, and meetings with over 600 individuals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question is: Are people really concerned about another Vision document—it was 2020 and 2030—when at this time in our current history in this country and the experience is that people are losing their jobs on a daily basis? That education also is of concern and it will become even of more concern when we commence the new academic year; that persons who would have looked forward to getting a stipend without even having a formidable job, or full-time employment or a sustainable one, would have been able to rely on the On-the-Job Training Programme for two years.

What we have experienced now is that you have fired the entire OJT staff. You are now rehiring people and that all those who were contracted, we have now learnt that 20 of those positions have moved from contract positions to permanent positions.

**Hon. Member:** What?

**Mr. F. Karim:** How did we arrive there?

**Hon. Member:** Vision 2030.

**Mr. F. Karim:** All of this is in the context of Vision 2030, with equality and opportunity and many hearts and many minds, and many values. What kind of society do we really want to create? And, you know, the question has to be asked as well: Of those persons who were rehired at the OJT Programme, does it constitute a person who is the director, who was employed previous to now and is now reappointed as the director, who was a former Vice-President?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(1). This does not relate to the document before us.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Again, Member, you have started the process. Again, that is the last point with regard to the director. So tie in the point. I have given you the leeway to talk about the OJTs, but tie in the point and bring it home.

**Mr. F. Karim:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. All of what I am saying, really, here is connected to vision, to strategy and to the implementation of policy for equity, and in terms of opportunity for us to contribute as citizens of this country if you want to acquire developed nation status. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I indicated as well—and I am also taking the lead where the Attorney General opened up the debate. He spoke about crime. People want to know how are we going to be solving this crime situation in this country? They want to know about health, as we had discussed and debated before. They want to know about the social services. They want to know about transportation between

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the islands. They want to know about food security. They want to know about the infrastructure development. They want to know when, really, contracts and work will continue on the Point Fortin Highway in terms of commuting to and from and opening up all the areas down in the south. They want to know about rent and they want to know about housing and they want to know about the impact of the property tax in our future. All of these are policy issues for Vision 2030.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to make a few comments. In terms of the future as well and in terms of our society moving towards some developed nation status, we must be concerned about 11,000 persons—students in our country—who were dropouts for the last couple years. Where are they? What are we doing about it? How are we going to build this human resource base? And you know, where are we going to find them? What are we going to do?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Vision 2030 that we are seeing here today, we would have been advised as well, even from the manifesto of the People's National Movement, statements would have been made where they were a government in waiting. After you have waited for five years and three months, after you had prepared to accept government, however it is, you are now in charge and we have to deal with that, as you say. What is it are we going to further delay by sending this to a joint select committee? Why do you not simply continue with your plans?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we came into government in 2010 we had our manifesto, just like they had a manifesto. They said that their manifesto is government policy and we have said, too, that our manifesto in 2010 was government policy. Well, if you have government policy, what are you waiting on? What are you delaying again for, as opposed to implementing your policy? What is it? Therefore, when you look at what had happened under our administration, we had unprecedented accomplishments and achievements over the five years and three months.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the opening remarks of the Member for Arouca/Maloney, the Minister of Planning and Development, the Member indicated that things are scuttled when administrations change; that this vision would lead us to developed nation status and it could be allowed sometimes, when you have a document like this—allowed to languish. And further connoted that those who abused, or refused, or misused, or did not use at all, the planning document, are sometimes described as unpatriotic. [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I said it was connoted, and I want to indicate, we on this side are truly patriotic to Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** Yes. [*Desk thumping*]



**Mr. F. Karim:** And I want to ask the question—and these are some of the things we want to look at. No matter who is in government, the Member for Arouca/Maloney indicated, this plan will continue. We have heard about cross-sectional plans and programmes over various sectors of the economy, and the question is, we did not, on this side, when we were in government we did not wait to have a joint select committee to expand COSTAATT Campus.

**Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Mr. F. Karim:** We did not wait to build a new campus for COSTAATT and to expand by thousands of persons who were able to access tertiary education. We did not wait, as well, for the acquisition of property to establish in a decentralized way, a new ministry headquarters in Chaguanas so that people will not be able to spend a lot of time in traffic jams and lack of productivity, which is now being converted to a farmers' market every weekend.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did not wait to construct the Children's Hospital in Couva which, up to this day, still, in a sense, is waiting and we are being told that it will be opened. The question is, when? I think we have to understand from our side, as well—and we have the evidence before us. When I looked at the Vision 2020 document and I went through it in some ways, you would have seen, under "Developing Innovative People" what were some of the things that were there for implementation.

The Attorney General spoke about implementation plan. And, clearly, when you looked at that document you would have seen the Multi-Sector Skills Training Programme. We did not wait for it to be implemented or to be expanded, although in the Schedule here you had "ongoing". We did not wait for the retraining programme to be only where it is, but to expand it. We did not wait for the GATE Programme to continue as it is, although they were saying here that it was going to be funded to facilitate access to tertiary education. And therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we did was that we looked at the economy; we looked at the creation of jobs; we looked at how do you move a society from where it is to where you want it to be, and therefore we expanded the GATE Programme, not only in terms of academia, but significantly into tertiary education and skills training.

**Hon. Member:** We had vision.

**Mr. F. Karim:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, like my colleague from Caroni Central, I, too, was partly involved in the deliberations of Vision 2020. And I was part of a subcommittee which was called Skills Development and Training. I remember very clearly some of the things that we recommended. And among the things that we recommended was through the National Training Agency. And I know that my

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colleague from Arouca/Maloney will again recall I said this several times, on several occasions, where, through the National Training Agency, we developed the Trinidad and Tobago Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET. And that was, although we had the launch of the Vision 2020 document 2006, in 2007, at the Trinidad Hilton on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May, 2007, there was an official signing to implement the CVQ, or the Caribbean Vocational Qualification, to be awarded through the CXC in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of the HELP Programme—the Higher Education Loan Programme—that also continued. We did not have to send these things to be discussed at a joint select committee. We knew what we wanted to do. We adopted the manifesto as government policy and went about implementing it because we knew that there was a short time towards the next election and therefore every single moment counted. We did not have to wait for the establishment or the expansion of the University of Trinidad and Tobago. We expanded the University of Trinidad and Tobago and continued the work in Tamana, in Wallerfield, and expanded it for the first time—you had UTT on land; you had the Marine Campus at Chaguaramas and for the first time you had the Aviation Campus at Camden in Couva. We did not have to go to a joint select committee to do that. As my colleagues have been saying, if you wanted to get the views of all the Members of Parliament, in this House and in the other place where you have Independent and Government Senators, and Opposition Senators, you could have laid the document, and we would have had extensive debate on all aspects.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did not have to wait to establish a national science centre. If you look at the lands just close to, or next to the Couva Children's Hospital, you would see an area that is fenced off. That is what we had in mind to establish a national science centre, on 27 acres of land—

**Hon. Member:** “All ah dat?”

**Mr. F. Karim:**—under the auspices of NIHERST, and it still stays there. We did not have to wait for the National Energy Skills Centre to start, for the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, a drilling academy, which saw students from other parts of the world, and particularly from the African Continent, coming to Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** Nigeria.

**Mr. F. Karim:** From Nigeria. And as a matter of fact, as we are speaking now and with the expansion and developments taking place right here on our doorsteps

with Guyana and Suriname, that training facility could be much utilized, not only when inviting people from those countries, but even by us, expanding the remit into other areas and other countries.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Vision 2020 document made a statement about one of the implementation schedules, about expanding John Donaldson Technical Institute. We did that. You can see, when you drive down there, it is very different to in the previous administration. And not only that, we have placed a printery, expanded the facilities and the programme offerings. You look all over Trinidad and Tobago, you will see on the horizon, the landscape. You look, for example, at the Accreditation Council, what they would have been doing. You look at all these aspects of development. And, therefore, one of the things that we needed to look at is how do we actually move, as I indicated, from where we are—where we want to move quickly, to go to a joint select committee.

### 9.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are some of the questions I wanted to ask and to place on the record because it is my view, like the view of my colleagues, that there is no real need. You have heard it from the Attorney General as well, and you have heard it from the Member for Arouca/Maloney, that implementation will continue in spite of and, therefore, we on this side say there is no need for it. Continue the implementation as rapidly as you can. You have our support. We did it and you can do it. You are ready and you are red, and you said that you are ready to develop this country. I think you should spend as much time as possible in your implementation schedule of your plans, policies and programmes.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, very sadly the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who are listening and/or watching this debate is having an opportunity to see, and to hear, and to learn some of the meanderings of the deep recesses of the minds and hearts of our colleagues on the other side of this House. It is very sad in that respect, but it is also in a strange way a good thing because the very public is having a chance to understand why development of Trinidad and Tobago is as challenged and challenging as it obviously is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are approaching 55 years of our independence. We have achieved much. We have come a long way, but no one would doubt or argue that we have a long way to go, and in some ways it cannot be gainsaid that we

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could have done far better given the resources, human resources, cultural resources, and certainly the economic resources that we enjoyed over those five and half decades to independence on August 31<sup>st</sup>—well, 2017.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Naparima stood here in his contribution and told us that—and I am quoting him—“The Government is not willing to engage us”. Now the very idea of bringing these measures to the Parliament for a debate, and then to ask that this matter be taken to a joint select committee of both Houses including Independent Senators from the other place, is a genuine attempt “to engage us”, if I may quote the Member. They are resisting this engagement this evening as the public, and as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would hear and see, and at the same time in a strange way accusing us of not wanting to engage them, convoluted and perverted as ever.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as has been alluded to for once in his lifetime accurately by the Member for Oropouche East, who I considered to be a bright and sensible but particularly mischievous, politically mischievous human person and representative, we had an understanding and we all know the purpose and purposes of a joint select committee. It is joint because it involves both Houses, it is select because we identified members—the Government identifies, the Opposition identifies, the Independent Bench choose among themselves—and the essence of this is to have a non-partisan united team working in the interest of the Parliament, as a subset of the Parliament, and then to make recommendations to the larger Parliament.

Let me take the opportunity so say, when this matter goes before a joint select committee, as I have just demonstrated it, it is the Government’s measures—because we were the ones who designed Vision 2020. The Government led the way. The Member for Caroni Central tells us he was never a part of the PNM, but he held office at the University of the West Indies, one of the key stakeholders that were consulted and asked to participate in the formulation of Vision 2020. Vision 2030 is not new to Trinidad and Tobago. A new name, yes, because 2020 is upon us. We lost some time because we were out of Government and we could not on the history—I am not accusing them of anything, but when you look back, when you take a historical perspective, you will find that we could have not depended on the UNC and their friends to advance that important national vision, that we call Vision 2020. It was so bad, and if the public thinks, or thought it was a joke, let me restate just to demonstrate to them that it was no joke that Minister Khan and others in the PNM received phone calls saying that the Government of the People’s Partnership, led by the UNC, under the watch of the Member for

Caroni Central as Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development, the Ministry in which this project sits, the national vision sits—which is why the Member for Arouca/Maloney brought this measure here today.

Minister Khan and others of the PNM received a call from a no doubt patriotic citizen saying, “Hear man, the Government of the day, the PP Government, was about to literally dump these important documents, and CDs, and records of Vision 2020 in the la basse. Come, save them for Trinidad and Tobago”. And patriotic as he was—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Charles:** I would like the source of that person who wanted to dump it in the la basse.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, again, the Attorney General has expounded on that already. So again, tie it in quickly and move on.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Yes. The source was the la basse [*Laughter*] and the Minister went there—the now Minister of Energy and Energy Industries—and secured them. I received some of those saved documents.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Would the Member give way?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** No! No!

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** No, he is not giving way.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Please, I am not giving way. So I only restated it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that the young people of this country will not think that it was facetious and that it was a joke. It was real.

As a result of that ugly fact, and as a result of their resistance today, it has now become clearer that we really cannot depend on them as a nation because they see this as a PNM thing, although it has to do with national development. The *Bible* says [*Desk thumping*] when there is no vision the people will perish, and while we came to Government on the 16<sup>th</sup>—it was the 8<sup>th</sup> sorry, of—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** The 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The 8<sup>th</sup> of September—7<sup>th</sup> of September we won the election—2015, we got to work immediately, implementing—we had a mandate from the people. We campaigned, part of that was Vision 2020. We said, “Look here man, look here citizens, we have a vision for the development of Trinidad and Tobago, a trajectory, a blueprint that we would run”, and we began to implement that from day one. We refurbished that Vision 2020, and before that,

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Vision 2020, the Chairman of that committee was a man call Arthur Lok Jack. No PNM, a captain of industry, identified by the then Cabinet to lead this. He led it. The Member for Caroni Central as a participant in the affairs at the university participated in that, and many others. It was cross-sectoral. All aspects of the society were engaged. So it is not new to Trinidad and Tobago. It is now Vision 2030 because, as I said, time was lost, '20 is upon us, and we still needed a vision. Essentially the same, but because of their attitude, their unpatriotic attitude, if I might say so, you see resistance even to today. That is why some of us argue that they do not want anything good for Trinidad and Tobago especially when the PNM is in Government.

If we cut back on expenses as we must— The Attorney General—and it does not bear repetition—he pointed out some of the indicia that brings to us all the reality that things are not economically, financially, the way they used to be. “The runs doh come like they used to”, if I may use the cricketing metaphor, and as a result of that we are constrained. So, what is the Government’s response? Sober, serious, prudent Government. No bacchanal every Monday morning, no corruption, no scandal. They are searching for it.

**Dr. Tewarie:** No scandal?

**Mr. Charles:** Just murders every day.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And you hear my friend, the Member for Naparima. So let me press on. The Member for Naparima does not want to take into account that notwithstanding their behaviour and their attitude, we still, the PNM, the Government, still bring these measures. You know, I heard the Member for Oropouche East praised Mr. Manning today. Well, Mr. Manning must have doubled over in his grave, and if he did not and I had a chance I will turn him over on hearing this. The Member for Oropouche East praising Mr. Manning today saying, “Whatever you say about him, the one thing you know when he had a plan he used to go ahead and do it.” They are the same ones who for that reason called him dictator.

I saw an election campaign in this country—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Silence!

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—where they had big picture with Mr. Manning in military outfit calling him Mugabe.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Yeah, that is right.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Now they want to play false praise of the man. Let him rest in perfect peace. He is a patriot. [*Desk thumping*] And like Dr. Williams, like George Michael Chambers, like Arthur Napoleon Raymond Robinson as Prime Minister of the NAR, and like Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley, we understand full well to depend on you for patriotism and the national good would be futile. But notwithstanding all of that, the head of this Government and under the leadership on this occasion of the Minister of Planning and Development, still bring the measures. We could have gone ahead and say, “This is it!” We brought it to the Parliament. We did not have to, you know, because we want to engage you and we are being accused of not engaging you. You are resisting it.

The Member for Naparima tells us we should be talking about jobs, but I simply want to say to him, *en passant*, there is no economy in the world, not capitalist, not socialist, not hybrid, as ours might very well be described. There is no economy, not America, not England, not France, none, that can produce sufficient jobs to meet the needs and expectations of the youngsters coming out of school on an annual basis. None!

**Mr. Charles:** Singapore

**Hon. F. Hinds:** None.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Naparima.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** No, that is not true. He is always singing about Singapore.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Proceed.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I am sorry. He did not meet with a Singaporean. He met with an extremist in France.

**Hon. Member:** Marine Le Pen.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And therefore, if he took time to read the document he will see segments on entrepreneurship, he will see segments on creating new businesses, diversification, to give the young people, rather than teach them falsely that when you get the CXC passes, nine or 10 of them with distinctions, and you get your four CAPE subjects, and then you go to university and you come out with your degree, or your Masters, there will be a job waiting here for you. It is not the reality. You will see in that document provisions for, vision for creating new jobs, whether it is in the technology, the area of information technology which is limitless and full of possibilities, new businesses. I heard the Member for Naparima falsely say—and he sat down challenging the Minister of Planning and

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Development—that this document is inimical to the interest of the silver economy, meaning the elderly. I would like equally to ask him—he did not give me way—to show me in the document a single line that is inimical to them. He will find none.

**Mr. Charles:** You want to give way?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** No! And this is why *en passant* if you would permit me, I say to the young people, even those in Morvant who protested recently, there is a formula to improving your life. It cannot be just I want a better way of life and somebody needs to just bring it on. “Eh-heh.” And this is what this vision is all about. I have seen many young people—I have seen a man who grew up in Laventille, a man who is now known internationally as Prof. Don Jacob developed his own martial arts style, and literally with his hands and feet as a karateka makes a great name for himself regionally, locally and internationally and makes money and survives using his bare hands and feet.

You got to find your skill, find your talent, train it, develop it, maximize it. Same thing Brian Lara did, Dwight Yorke did, and there are many others. I know a young man, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who has acquired the skill of repairing cell phones. They say there are about three—well, the figure shows that there are about two million cell phones in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** 2.6.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** 2.6. He has acquired the ability to repair them, and on any given day when you go to his shop in Town Centre Mall he would have about 20 of these units open in front of him with his little tools. His wife, his baby is there. She is managing the cash and he is repairing them one at a time. Lots of people crowded up in there waiting for service, and he earns \$300 at a time, \$400 for minor repairs. He does a very good thing. I am sure he is better paid than I am.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** For sure.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** We are so stylish in our communities, even if you are a good barber you can survive, although I would not sit on your chair as a Rastaman. [Laughter] And these are the things I want to talk to “dem” young people in Morvant and other places about. That is why we put the technology centre in their bosom for that, but a young man living three minutes away across the Beetham tells me that if he only crosses the Eastern Main Road and Priority Bus Route to go by the tamarind tree to the technology centre he would be dead, and then you will hear the Member for Naparima, another murder. Empty, foolish—murder. Those are the issues we need to be focusing on and speaking honestly to the young people of this country, but let me proceed.



The Member talks about crime, and you know I have to use the word “shameless”. I worked with the police in the United States, not for very long. The Leader of the Opposition as he then was, Dr. Keith Rowley, sent me to spend three workdays with police in Halifax County. I patrolled with them, I watch the way they did their business—when we were in Opposition—and yes, they respond on every call. I watched it well. The Member for Naparima gets here today and tells us about his US experience. Unfortunately, it is not the case in Trinidad and Tobago, but that is not new. That was so when his Government was in power and long before too. So it is an aspiration which you will find in Vision 2030, which they are rejecting again, but they want to eat their cake, sell it, give it away and still have it.

So we tax; they opposed it; they go to court—well—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Please do not go there.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** No. No. We cut back on expense. I heard the Member for Chaguanas East talking about GATE. Why did we cut back on GATE? Not because we wanted to, but because we had to. The runs “doh” come like they used to come any more. That is the reality, and I could discuss why we are in the condition we are in you know, and the wasteful expenditure that we have been carrying in in this country for the last 40 years, which exploded in the last five under their watch. Okay? But I will not go there. That is for another time.

So I agree with the Member, but the only issue I have is that he tries to behave as though this issue of a police officer, or police officers, not responding in five minutes is a new phenomenon. It is the arrogance that troubles me because people are listening to him and saying, “But wait, the fella mad. He behaving as though this new.” But we know from our experience this is unfortunately the case, and the Minister of National Security and this Government is working to try to see how best we can improve that. And tells us boldly, and baldly, and I do not mean it literally—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** He could get “ah” wig. I will tell you where to get a good one.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member. Silence, both sides.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I think I overheard the Member for Naparima saying he want a muff, but that is a different thing. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Silence.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Telling us that we will not tell them of crime targets, for example, how will we reduce the prevalence, or the presence of illegal firearms in the community by a certain amount. Has that ever been done in the country? This is the most transparent Government that they have ever seen in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] The one thing, we account to the public, led by the Prime Minister, most transparent and open. Do you know why, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because we have nothing to hide.

We bring Vision 2030 here and we say let us debate it, but we cannot get all the contributions on the floor like this. Let us go to a joint select committee. In response to the Member for Oropouche East, it is the Government's plan. We could have gone ahead without it on behalf of all people, but because of their behaviour and attitude we still say let us drag them unwillingly into it, kicking and screaming. Let us sit down in a joint select committee because we do not want this to be a PNM thing as you see it. It is a national thing. We have Standing Committee on Energy, you know, because the country realizes that energy policy ought to be consistent for the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago, from Government to Government, and Vision 2020 is unique—2030 is unique in this sense.

It is a national policy programme and it ought to be bipartisan. It is for all of us. You may have differences in ideas. If you share it with us, we take it on board, but the implementation will be for whoever is in power at the time, and on this occasion and for the next 20 years it will be the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] And I “doh” say that lightly because I have sworn to Almighty God, the true and living Jah, that as long as I have life in me I will protect the people of Trinidad and Tobago from the governance of the UNC. Not because I hate them, [*Desk Thumping*] not because I dislike them, but simply because of their behaviour, their attitude and what they did to my country when they had an opportunity to lead it.

**Mr. Charles:** 48(1). 48(6), improper motives and saying what we did to the country and—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Overruled. Proceed.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you. The Member for Chaguanas East, he said—no, the Member for Naparima, “I told them that GATE will be cut and it came to pass. I told them that the rapid rail will be no more and it came to pass.” Well, I told them that the UNC would have been thrown out of Government in 2010 and that came pass. [*Desk thumping*]

The reason why we had to cut GATE, and the rapid rail is no more, is not because these are not good ideas. It was the PNM who implemented the GATE programme. It was the PNM who considered a mass transit system in light of the environmental circumstances, and traffic issues, the most—I mean, the UNC when they were in

Government, they were considering mass transit too you know, but cable cars from Picton down to City Gate under Minister Tewarie as he then was. So you could imagine me in a cable car coming down the hill and fellas with their slingshots. Mimic. We considered mass transit from Arima to Port of Spain, from Curepe to Chaguanas. We said so in the campaign you know and before, because it is good for Trinidad and Tobago. All modern cities have mass transit system.

I was in London recently—we have all been to London—a perfect example, engineering fleet underground. Northern line, district line, central lines, circle line, Piccadilly line, all of that traversing the earth, underground. All modern cities have that. We want in Vision 2030 to have that for Trinidad too. But we said in the circumstances—again we could have gone ahead, but my Prime Minister told us, “Let’s take this thing to an independent body, the IDB, with experience in financing these kinds of projects all over the world.” They would have seen the good, the bad and the ugly, and we put it to them and they told us that at this time, given the economic circumstances in which we are in, it is not feasible. So it is in cold storage for that reason because 85 per cent of our revenues have been hit. The runs do not come like they used to anymore. In the days of Viv Richards, and Brian Lara, and “dem” fellas, the thing is a little different and that is all. Nothing to be ridiculed about.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is the Government’s response? We still, even in crises like these, require a vision. More so now than any time else.

**Hon. Member:** Nations always need vision.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** You must have a vision as my good friend, the Member for Moruga/Tableland, educated, and decent, and dignified as he always is, has just reminded me. So we decided to spare Trinidad and Tobago of the waste, and we have been all systematically working to cut out waste. You heard the Attorney General tell us about some large projects with some big price tags that we inherited. We put it on pause only to ensure that we get the right price and value for money, and that is what we are about. And corruption under—I can tell you this. Corruption did not stop on September 07, 2015, “eh”. The people who will be corrupt in the society are still here, and the circumstances that might have prevailed, some are still in place. We are dismantling them on a daily basis, cutting down on the opportunities for graft, and thievery, and corruption. That is our response to this. *[Interruption]*

I know. I know. I know. “I wish I was in a position, you would ah know.”

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Address the Chair, please.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So we are seeking consensus and we went to the representatives of the people. As I say, Vision 2020, which is encapsulated in Vision 2030 with a little more pruning, is not new to Trinidad. There were wide consultations, cross-sectoral consultations, and we are still seeking that consensus. So we come to our friends who represent the people of their constituencies, and the people of their constituencies are hoping that they will take the opportunity to assist in shaping this vision for Trinidad and Tobago, rather than just standing foolishly aside and cussing it, and criticizing it.

It is as simple as that in very banal and ordinary terms and even that, they are resisting.

**10.00 p.m.**

So, just to answer the Member for Oropouche East, is it Parliament's thing or is it Government's thing? Well, it is Government's thing bringing it to the Parliament as representatives of the people so that they will bring to bear their thoughts on it. When they make recommendations, when the Joint Select Committee on behalf of the larger Parliament, because the Joint Select Committee is a subset of the larger Parliament. When it makes recommendations—*[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am being disturbed.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Members, again, silence when the Member is on his legs. As I am on my legs one time, your speaking time has expired. You have an additional 15. Do you care to avail yourself?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Most certainly.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Proceed.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you very warmly. So when the Joint Select Committee, which is a subset of the Parliament, makes sensible, as one would expect, recommendations, the Government will take those on board in shaping this policy for the benefit of all of Trinidad and Tobago.

So what the public is seeing here today is the fundamental difference between the PNM and the UNC. The PNM is about nation and nation building. We are the master builders of Trinidad and Tobago. We built this country; the history shows that. This is no boast. *[Desk thumping]* This is no boast and this is not about arrogance; I am just reflecting on the history and the country knows. This is why they run to us after the disasters that they taste. They run to us to rebuild and to

fix again, [*Desk thumping*] because they know. Sometimes like the children of Israel, they become a little impatient and they act up a little bit and they tell you “Ah go vote for UNC” and all them foolish things, but they know where barley and balisier grow. [*Desk thumping*]

And they know that their institutions—from the Central Bank, the Treasury, the Cabinet, the Parliament, the Government—they know that they are in safe hands with the PNM. The people know that. They know that. So what they are seeing here is the fundamental difference: what the PNM is all about and what the UNC is all about. The UNC’s position on this is that this is no national document, “da is ah PNM ting”.

**Mr. Charles:** It is. You just said it.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Yes, yes. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I reflect on the contribution of the Member for Naparima, I saw him scrounging around looking for things to say. It got as ridiculous as that. “He start to talk about crime, he talk about the economy, he just looking for things to object, to object, to object.” Looking for problems. And that is a reflection on the ethos of the UNC. They want us to fail.

The Prime Minister and a team had been speaking along with private interests—Shell and so on—speaking to Venezuela for months since we came into office, finally struck an agreement to get access to the Dragon Field to get a supply of gas coming into Trinidad and Tobago for two reasons: to resuscitate the industries that depend on gas in Point Lisas and otherwise.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, again, that point has been taken care of by the AG. Tie it in quickly and you can move on.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Yes, indeed. The point I was making en passant, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is simply that if, from their posture, their attitude, their behaviour, if they had a chance to shut down that, “they do it”. The Prime Minister returns from Chile today, talking about renewable energy, how impressed he was with what he saw there and only recently the Cabinet of this country, of which we are a part, approved a position, a decision, that a state agency will take responsibility from here on out for the whole development of the renewable industry platform.

So the point I am making—and the AG made it but I must make it in passing—is that the implementation and the work that the Government is doing now is going on apace and it is not mutually exclusive to getting my friends’ support on the other side for the Vision 2030 larger development project. We will do it with or without them but we would like to have their participation and support in the national interest. But if we do not get that, we will do it anyway.

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So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I commend the report. I commend its movement to a joint select committee. I think my friends on the other side should grab the opportunity to get involved in national development, not only sniping in an adversarial way from the other side, but let us sit in a committee and discuss the national interest in a real way. You have ideas, bring them to bear. We will genuinely take them on board.

In the UK, joint select committees, in that mature Parliament that is the UK, over 700 years old, when they sit in joint select committees, they genuinely throw their partisan hats off, you know, and they work in the national interest. I went to London recently on a national security and cybercrime and terrorism conference. It was for Chairmen of all joint select committees around the Commonwealth, about 90 participants, and I was very, very impressed to learn how serious a joint select committee and in this case, in particular on national security, is taken in the United Kingdom. Every Member of that committee knows intuitively that confidentiality is a critical element and they choose persons of quality to be on that committee and others, because they—you know what they told us in very banal terms? When the Joint Select Committee speaks, it has to be credible, it has to be believable. It is not a joke, it is quite a serious matter and their Parliament is as adversarial as you can get it. But they have matured to the point where they can meet in joint select committee—the same point the Attorney General made about Jamaica and I am sure in other parts of the world. You must.

All this talk, as I conclude, about separation of powers, just by way of an example, the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. All this talk about separation of powers, yes, conceptually that is fine; academically, that is fine; and there are some boundaries that must be observed for the smooth running of the State. But, as I close, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will tell you that there are occasions when they must, all three, work together and collaborate in the interest of the State.

So I commend this to my friends on the other side and I hope that there will be some streak of nobility in them that my words would link into and they may have a turn of heart, not for my sake, not for the PNM's sake, but for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I recognize the Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I am standing on Standing Order 44(8). I simply want to raise the matter.

[MADAM SPEAKER in *the Chair*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I would suggest that you let the next speaker on your side deal with that matter. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Tewarie:** The next speaker would not know. It had to do with the Member for Laventille West.

**Mr. Hinds:** “Yuh challenging the Speaker?”

**Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan** (*Tabaquite*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Before I respond to some of the now very common accusations that are made by the Member for Laventille West, in particular, against Members of this side and, by extension, the Members of the political party which this side represents, I would like to put on record that the United National Congress and the Opposition does have and always had an objective, a vision and a mission for the prosperity of Trinidad and Tobago, unlike what is being attempted by the Member for Laventille West and other Members on the other side.

You might recall, Madam Speaker, that when we came into office in 2010, one of the early things we did, very early, was to put on the parliamentary table the manifesto of People’s Partnership, and we did that for a reason. That in the interest of transparency and open Government, that people would have been able to take up that manifesto and look at it and see the achievements we had over what we promised for that particular five years. And when you listen to my colleague, the Member for Chaguanas East, today and you listened to my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East today, you would have recognized that there are a myriad of achievements that have benefited the people of this country and have been of productive, international interest as a whole.

I want to begin by repeating that while we are dealing with 2030 and that it is going to a joint select committee that we have an objective also and it is for a prosperous, free and democratic society with abundant opportunities. What we have seen in the last 20 months has been an attack on a democratic society—a free and democratic society, an attack on prosperity and also, we have seen a decrease in terms of opportunities.

Madam Speaker, it was our vision, our mission, if you may, our objective to continue to build a society that is prosperous, free and democratic that provided good jobs and varied opportunities for individual progress. And we had projected to achieve by 2025, an inclusive—and I want to make a point about inclusive—more equitable society. We had established a goal for what we wanted to achieve, which was a per capita income of US \$30,000, and a 50 per cent increase in GDP growth.

**Mr. Charles:** Measurable goals.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Measurable goals, and we were never afraid to present measurable goals to the population. [*Desk thumping*] We wanted to transform Trinidad and Tobago and its economy into a more competitive, more innovative and, in line with developed societies, a greener economy, and create a society in which people are free from the fear of crime, they were happy, productive and above all, disciplined and united in purpose. Madam Speaker, those were, in essence, some of the objectives and the ethos of our philosophy and approach to how we intended to govern this country.

Madam Speaker, I want to really put to rest and to stop this trend that has been taking place in the Parliament and outside of the Parliament, where Members of the Government have been accusing Members of the Opposition of being unpatriotic. I think the time has come to put a stop to that. Really and truly put a stop to that. Today, in particular, the matter was again raised by the Member for Laventille West, whose voice has been on all the radio stations making this accusation about patriotism and us being unpatriotic. But I want to ask the question: Does he realize that his attack upon the head of the Maha Sabha, Mr. Satnarine Maharaj, yesterday, is being perceived as an attack on the Hindu community in Trinidad and Tobago? [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, I rise on 48(6). I attacked no one, not physically or otherwise and he is imputing improper motives.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Tabaguite, maybe you could just rephrase that and continue.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Speaker, the perception is there in this country after yesterday, and continues tonight, that there has been an attack upon the Maha Sabha's Secretary General, first, with respect to the—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** I asked you to use another term.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** There is a perception developing as a result of utterances by the other side and accusations of unpatriotism, because it was made that we are unpatriotic on several occasions. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West did it first, now the Member for Laventille West is doing it. They have been doing it and I want to warn them that they are treading on dangerous ground because you have to understand that people like Mr. Satnarine Maharaj represent the community and that community is beginning to perceive that this is an attack on the community and this has dangerous things for the political roots in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]



**Madam Speaker:** Member, I just asked you, in the language, to be a bit temperate, please. Continue.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, I will be. But I ask: Is it unpatriotic for the head of the Maha Sabha to ask that two schools that are 95 and 97 per cent complete—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1). How is this relevant to this debate? [*Crosstalk*] How?

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Naparima, I believe you had an opportunity to have joined the debate and Member for Princes Town, if you intend to join the debate, you will be allowed in the proper time. Okay? Member for Tabaquite, I would like you to rein in and not continue on that path, please. Continue.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Speaker, are you asking me not to deal with the issue of unpatriotism at all?

**Mr. Padarath:** Which was raised by them.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, in terms of talking with respect to something else that happened outside of here, I am not allowing that.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Madam Speaker, I would just like to say that is the call for equality of treatment unpatriotic or is the call for equality of treatment of a respect unpatriotic? And I do not see that as being unpatriotic because when you stand for a principle like equality or you stand for a principle of inclusion, Madam Speaker, it is for every single citizen of this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, the Member for Laventille West asked the question: why is development not taking place and tried to become a psychoanalyst into the minds of the Members on this side. Why is development not taking place? The Member should really be asking the question: why has development not taken place over the last 20 months in Trinidad and Tobago? Why the country has come to a halt in the last 20 months? Why has the construction sector been parked up? Why have so many persons lost their jobs in the construction sector? This is what the Member for Laventille West should be asking about. He must be asking: Why it is that it is now clear that the Government is bereft of ideas and more than that, bereft of action, the ability to do?

Madam Speaker, development is not taking place not because there is not a vision. They had a vision, we have a vision. But the difference between the Government and the Opposition is when the Opposition was in office, the Opposition was able to turn its vision into action and therefore, the vision of the People's Partnership did not remain a hallucination, an unrealized dream, and visions can become

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hallucinations and unrealized dreams if you do not have the competence, the innate competence to turn it into programmes and to implement those programmes. So it is one thing talking well about your vision and everything else but do you have the capacity to turn it into action, and so far, the Government has not shown that it has that ability, and this is why I am responding to the Member for Laventille West when he asked the question why development is not taking place.

Madam Speaker, he said that you cannot depend on the UNC. The United National Congress has come to this Parliament on every occasion that it has had to come and on every occasion it needed to bring its ideas, its moral, vision to legislation, as well as its technical competence in improving legislation, we have done that in this Parliament. We have done it although we have been accused of being unpatriotic. We have done it although they accused us of not wanting to support, but we have done it in the interest of providing good law and good governance in this country. [*Desk thumping*] And even if they come now and accused us of going to court, we went for good reason. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** And won.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** We went for good reason and that is our role and that is our responsibility. That does not equate or amount to unpatriotism; that does not equate or amount to a lack of cooperation with the Government. The Government says that they want our ideas and so on, they want our inputs but the Government must go back to see how they have behaved towards—in dealing with legislation when we had substantial amendments to make to the legislation, the way they were rejected. You cannot speak from both sides of your mouth. You have to be sincere and the Government has not demonstrated a sincerity in dealing with the Opposition.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Laventille West, when he was speaking, spoke about costs exploded under the People's Partnership. Maybe he has a very short memory about the cost, that exploded at the Brian Lara stadium, about the cost overruns at the waterfront project. He talks about a mass transit system that the Government wanted to implement. But you know, Madam Speaker? A mass transit system may not have been necessary if this Government really had vision and the ability to implement. When you develop a country, you do not develop just Port of Spain or you do not just develop Chaguanas or you do not just develop San Fernando, you develop the entire country, and this is why we had established several growth poles in order to facilitate development across the country so that people will have jobs where they live and the economy of those places will prosper.

Madam Speaker, you know, when I was the Mayor of Chaguanas, we had a vision for Chaguanas that said this: that Chaguanas is a place to live, a place to do business, a place to engage in recreation, a place to play and a place for leisure. And I remember Dr. Anthony Sabga, when he read that vision on the newspaper, he called me and he said, “I want to see you” and I said, “Dr. Sabga, I will come into Port of Spain to see you” because he was a person I respected, he was an elderly gentleman and I do not think I want to have him come to Chaguanas. He says, “No, no, I am going to come to your office in Chaguanas” and he came to the office. God bless his soul, he was a very good man. I spent many moments with him in his office and he would mentor me on several things including leadership. And Madam Speaker, he came there and he said, “You know, I saw what you have said and I too believe that Chaguanas should be a place to do business”. And in that office, in the Mayor’s office, he said, “I am going, for the first time in 90 years, to move the printing of the *Trinidad Guardian* to Chaguanas”. And he was engaged in decentralization. From the private sector, he was able to see what we were talking about. That you needed to build all the communities and he was willing to contribute to that.

If, in fact, a Government has a vision that is appealing to the private sector and appealing to people, people will latch on to that vision and they will help you in the process. But if your vision is stymied and if your vision lacks clarity, and if your vision is only on paper and you do not have the ability to articulate it in a way that excites people, then nothing will happen to your vision, it will remain an unrealized dream, a hallucination.

But the matter of mass transit is important. It is important for this reason. That had the Government, the PNM, had they, in fact, engaged in the development of small towns, you would have had something else happening. Then, for example, in the Gran Couva region, you would have then been linking the cocoa estates and one of the best-producing cocoa to the development of chocolate factories in that area and you might have then been going across to Belgium or to Germany or the US, what have you, and attracting an investor to work alongside your cocoa producers and not have to export your raw beans at a lower price but get the value added for dark chocolates produced there. Right now, you have some small chocolate producers, they are struggling when you need to go and work with them and begin a process of diversification right there.

And if you are diversified and look at Cedros as an area for development, you could have developed a form of wellness tourism in that whole area of Cedros. Wellness tourism. There are so estates in that area—300 acres, 400 acres—that could have been developed in this regard. What are we waiting for to do those kinds of

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things? Member for Arouca/Maloney, Minister of Planning. So, the development of the small towns, in order to reduce the flow of traffic into Port of Spain and San Fernando and so on is very, very important and that has to be tied to your diversification. Diversification is not going to come about by wishful thinking, diversification is going to come about by choosing small segments of your economy and doing something about the diversification process.

Madam Speaker, in that regard, the Member for Laventille West is speaking about costs and explosion. Imagine if we had used the \$545 million spent on the feasibility for the rapid rail to develop the small towns and to engage in small business development in those particular areas? And there are myriads of opportunities to develop small business in this country. Myriads of opportunities to do it. What has happened to the fish processing facilities in Cedros and Iacos? What has happened to that? If that is developed, the number of people can be properly employed and paid in that area would be something to think about.

Madam Speaker, the Member also talked about the UNC not advancing a vision for Trinidad and Tobago. What the Member should really be questioning is in the last 20 months when they have had an opportunity to come back now and review what they were ready to implement, why are so many people losing their jobs? Why do we not have a better quality health service? Only today, I got a response—thanks to the Parliament—that it is now taking six to eight months to have cataract surgery done in Trinidad. When you have in San Fernando, a surgical unit that has been dedicated. Why? What has happened to that surgical unit dedicated to do cataract surgery in San Fernando? What has happened? *[Interruption]* Madam Speaker, I am not going to let the Member for Laventille West disturb me with his—

**Madam Speaker:** Member, Member, just direct your points to the Chair so you would not be distracted.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** No, you see, Madam Speaker, with due respect to everybody, the Member for Laventille West is always vitriolic, always spewing things against us here. *[Desk thumping]*

**Madam Speaker:** Member, let us direct—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Yes, but Madam Speaker—*[Interruption]*

**Madam Speaker:** If it is a substantive Motion, you are going to bring, I am going to allow that, but that is not what is before us. Please, direct your contribution here. You are experienced that you could sort of avoid being distracted by other Members.

**10.30 p.m.**

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** And I will bring such a Motion one day, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, he should be asking why so many people are losing their jobs? Why have we not had a better quality health service? Why, in 2010, when we came into office, there was only US \$500 million in investments per year, but when we left we had an average US \$1.5 billion per year.

What is it we are doing different that encouraged foreign investors to come into this country, and why has foreign investment dried up? Foreign investments come into a country when they have confidence in your government, and confidence in your leadership. What is it now that has made the difference that foreign investment is not coming at the rate that it should come? It is very important to ask these questions. And this is not being overly critical. You said you want our ideas, you said you want our inputs. I am saying that we have to start by asking the questions. Why? Why is it that foreign investment is drying up? What are we doing to really go out there and market Trinidad and Tobago, market Trinidad and Tobago, so that people can come and join with us in the development process and in industry?

Madam Speaker, the Member spoke again that we do not have a vision for Trinidad and Tobago, we do not advance Trinidad and Tobago, and so on. Madam Speaker, we recognize that if you want to deal with crime in Trinidad and Tobago, I accept we have lost maybe two generations, maybe we have. I also believe they are recoverable, depending on what strategies we implement. But we decided that you had to also start at the level where you needed to get right values into children. And that is why we promoted early childhood education to the point where we achieved universal early childhood education by developing strategies. What do we have today, Madam Speaker? A truncation of that entire programme because so many early childhood centres that were being built have now been stopped. They are at different stages of completion. Where are the priorities that we need in this country, in order to continue the process of development, in terms of a real vision for Trinidad and Tobago? If you miss instilling values in children before they are three to four years old now—they used to say six, I say three to four—you have missed the boat for a long time ahead.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, while I understand all the various points, if you could just bring it back to the substance of this debate, which is the appointment of the joint select committee.

**Dr. S. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, but I am also responding to the Member's accusations that we did not have a vision for Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] And I think that I have equal opportunity to do that, in terms of my response.

The Member spoke about us as having a bacchanal every Monday morning. Well I was wondering, you know, whether the Member was not living in this country; whether he was not looking at his own party and own Government and the number of bacchanals. Every day the newspaper has a headline about some bacchanal, whether it is EFCL or what have you, some bacchanal or the other taking place in the country. Poor Minister of Sport, his bacchanal is not over yet. The axe is hanging over his head.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that as a political party, and as an Opposition we will support, we will support what is in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago because we know that we have to arrive in a future we create and not a future others create for us. We know that we have to make an instantaneous leap, in terms of our attitude to our own country. We know that. We are not barren of that thought. But we are not going to allow the Government to just do what it wants at the expense of the national interest. And this is what they want. They want us to come here today and just vote yes or no for the joint select committee, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I have a problem of what a joint select committee is really and truly about. You know, earlier today someone texted me and said: "Is what you all are wasting your time in Parliament about?" So I texted back and said: "What do you mean?" And the person said: "Well, what about laws? You all have no laws to pass? You all have nothing else to do?" And while that is just one person, I wonder how wide that perception is of what is happening in the Parliament.

People want to know that the Parliament is doing things to affect them and their interests, whether it is passing laws that will help in the fight against crime, or whatever other laws in the country that will protect their interests, or advance their prosperity, this is what people want to know, Madam Speaker. And I am not sure that sending this to a joint select committee is going to advance the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Maybe the Government has really stopped listening to the ground, as they say, listening to what people want in this country, Madam Speaker.

It is good to have vision. We must have a vision. Nations perish which do not have a vision. But at the same time, while you have a vision, there is a reality that we all have to live by. Madam Speaker, I want to assure this country that this Opposition is interested in the future of this country, otherwise we would not be here. I have spent 37 years in the politics. I joined in 1980. This is 2017, and I am

still here, very much here, and intend to continue my term of office, and continue to contribute like all my colleagues here. This is why new blood is being brought in, like the Member for Princes Town, the Member for Fyzabad, the Member for Mayaro; all of these persons who have the interest of their communities at heart and want to develop it.

Madam Speaker, with these few words, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Mr. Padarath:** But Madam Speaker, I was—

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Princes Town, could you kindly take your seat.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Agile, Princes Town. Madam Speaker, I wish to very quickly bring this debate to a close. As I do that, I would like to thank the Members who participated. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, let me indicate from the outset that the Member for Caroni Central took us along a road of spirituality and one of the things that he did not mention is without a vision, a people perish. [*Desk thumping*] And, Madam Speaker, we of the PNM have had a history of having a vision for our party and a vision for Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We had our earliest vision in the Chaguaramas documents. We talked about perspectives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago in the '80s and '90s, written by the late Morris Marshall and the late Ken Valley. We had our Vision 2020 document, and on each occasion, Madam Speaker, this party that is now in Government has had a vision for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, as I said when I started this debate, on the last occasion with Vision 2020, we put the document in the Parliament; however, we did not subject it to parliamentary scrutiny. And, Madam Speaker, again on this occasion, we have a vision document and our objective is to subject it to parliamentary scrutiny.

Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that those on the other side are of the view that there is no need for this to be done. In fact, the Member for Caroni Central quoted, I think it was a report indicating that Jamaica's Vision 2030 is not being accepted by the people of Jamaica. However, he did go on to say that it has been accepted

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by the Parliament and it is proceeding along the road. Now, Madam Speaker, the people of Jamaica did not accept a toll highway in Jamaica when it was being built, but now they use it and they are happy about it.

Madam Speaker, in a lot of instances you will find people who do not accept what may be seen to be the vision and I am telling you in Kenya, in Rwanda, in Singapore, in Malaysia, in India, in Nigeria, not everybody accepts the vision, but those vision documents have been laid in the Parliaments. They are part of the national vision, part of the national vision, Madam Speaker. We do not want this to be a PNM vision alone. In fact, Madam Speaker, the PNM's vision for Trinidad and Tobago has brought Trinidad and Tobago to where it is today. [*Desk thumping*] We have not said once you put us in office, unless you accept what we agree with we are not going to do something for you, and that has been the cry on the other side. For years, the Member for Diego Martin West asked for a particular school to be built in his area. It was rejected by those on the other side.

**Mr. Padarath:** “Is not the Point Cumana school?”

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Princes Town, it is late in the day. I would ask everybody to comply by the Standing Orders particularly Standing Order 53.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** That Point Cumana School, the Member for Diego Martin West had to pull teeth—

**Mr. Padarath:** And it was done, Member.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:**—to get that school built.

**Mr. Padarath:** Member, Member.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin West also wanted a recreation facility for the three Diego Martin constituencies. It is now being built. The fishing complex, totally ignored. The health centre, eventually constructed, eventually constructed, Madam Speaker.

And Madam Speaker, let me also say that with those on the other side, unfortunately when things are not going their way they resort to race. And that is exactly what the Member for Tabaquite attempted—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Members:** No.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, that is exactly what the Member for Tabaquite attempted to do today. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order, order.



**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** And Madam Speaker—

**Mr. Padarath:** “Is your Prime Minister talk about racial dotishness.”

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Princes Town, maybe you can just take a little walk and come back in. Members, this type of behaviour is not going to be tolerated. Member, please take your little walk. Maybe you would come back and you would have yourself under control. I do not want anybody laughing when I make a ruling. Thank you.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, I continue that the leader of the Maha Sabha indicated there was a concern about two schools, and then that was compounded, Madam Speaker, by the Leader of the Opposition—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** I am not going to let you talk about the talk with the leader of the Maha Sabha. I did not allow it before. Please.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate that. The Leader of the Opposition made a point that no money was given for Indian Arrival Day, which was totally inaccurate Madam Speaker, and it is not fair. It is not fair, for those on the other side to always resort to that kind of behaviour [*Desk thumping*] in a country where all of us have to live. Madam Speaker, this is the home of all of us, every single one of us. And, Madam Speaker, if you look at these Benches, every single race, creed, class is represented on these 41 seats, [*Desk thumping*] every single race, creed and class. So, Madam Speaker, when we stand or sit in this Parliament, we are here representing everybody in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

And Madam Speaker, if you look at me, you would not know that I have East Indian family, would you? You would never suspect that. Okay.

**Mr. Charles:** Neither me.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** So stop. We have First People’s family. We have white family, all of us. Okay? So why can we not stop?

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Speaker, 48(1), please. I really do not understand—

**Mr. Charles:** Why is she going down this road?

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Naparima, I also invite you to take a little walk and return, please. Member for Arouca/Maloney, you made the point. Could you kindly move on, please?

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very kindly, Madam. Madam Speaker, I also wanted to make the point that today a country’s success is determined by its developmental vision. Those countries that do not have a vision are not

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successful, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] And, Madam Speaker, we have said that we can move this country from developing to developed. We said that before and we are saying it again. And, Madam Speaker, all we are saying is that a joint select committee is recommended because it is incumbent on us, as we hold the reins of governance at this time, to ensure that whatever vision is agreed upon, is one that is agreed upon by all of us.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Laventille West, I would also like you to take a little walk and return, please. I think it is late. If you take a little walk I think you will be better able to assist me in controlling the quorum. Continue, Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you, Ma'am. Madam Speaker, successful states are those that specialize in developing their unique assets, and if that is not done they become marginalized. And, Madam Speaker, it is easy to become marginalized in this world.

Madam Speaker, I just came from a conference, the CDB Annual General Meeting, and one of the points that was made by the Demas lecturer was that small states in particular have to become very nimble and very capable of adapting to the new realities. And Madam Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago is one of those states that must adapt.

Madam Speaker, I would like to just remind my colleagues on the other side that despite the fact that they keep trying to rewrite history, that they keep trying to convince us that they had a plan, that they had a way forward for Trinidad and Tobago, I want to ask them, Madam Speaker, if they remember all the different scandals that took place under their watch; the Invaders Bay that was given out without proper procedure; the situation with LifeSport, Madam Speaker; the situation with the fire truck; the situation with SIS.

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Speaker, 48(1).

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Arouca/Maloney, I would allow you a little leeway, but please move on to the next point.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, it is very unfortunate that our colleagues on the other side seem to forget very quickly that there was no—the only vision they appeared to have at the time was making sure that all these scandals took place and that they built box drains. That seemed to be the only vision that they had.

**Mr. Lee:** Standing Order 48(6), Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Please continue, Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, I would like to place on the record that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is clear in its path for where Trinidad and Tobago needs to go. In the preparation of the vision document we looked at work that had been done by the previous Government and where we found that it was necessary to incorporate that work, we did that.

Madam Speaker, all I can say is that, again, a country's success is determined by its ability to adapt to challenging and changing times. It is also determined by its ability to develop a strategic vision, and without a strategic vision agreed upon by all the developmental partners, and in our case we have had the input of the United Nations Development Programme. We have had the input of the UN and their SDGs programme. We have had the European Union make an input. We have had several developmental agencies and Ministries participate in the development of the document. And we have also indicated that each Ministry and each agency will have to develop their own implementation strategy and their own sectoral plans.

But the only input we have not had, Madam Speaker, is that of the Members of Parliament who represent the 1.4 million people of Trinidad and Tobago and that is why we stand before you this evening asking that a joint select committee be established, and Madam Speaker, I will say again that this joint select committee is to be established to consider the draft National Development the Strategy 2016 to 2030 (Vision 2030); that the committee be mandated to review and analyze the draft National Development Strategy, consider the recommendations contained in the draft National Development Strategy and report on its recommendations for the development of a national—and I repeat, a national development plan—no later than June 21, 2017.

Madam Speaker, despite the fact that this may be coming from a PNM Government, it is a strategy for national development. And, Madam Speaker, we do believe that there is a need for the Members of Parliament to make their input at this time. And Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this joint select committee be established. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved:*

That a Joint Select Committee be established to consider the Draft National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030):

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*Further resolved:*

That this Joint Select Committee be mandated to:

- (a) review and analyse the Draft National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030);
- (b) consider the recommendations contained in the Draft National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030); and
- (c) report its recommendations for the development of a National Development Plan no later than June 21, 2017.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of June, 2017, at 1.30 p.m. at which time we will continue debate on the Marriage Act, which is the debate on the second reading of a Bill to amend the Marriage Act, Chap. 45:01; the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act, Chap. 45:02; the Hindu Marriage Act, Chap. 45:03; the Orisa Marriage Act, Chap. 45:04, and the Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Act, Chap. 45:51. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 10.55 p.m.*

#### WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

*The following question was asked by Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East) earlier in the proceedings:*

#### **Caroni Green Limited (Use of Machinery and Equipment)**

- 124. Mr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East)** asked the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries:  
Could the Minister provide his Ministry's plans for the use of the machinery and equipment of Caroni Green Limited?

*The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:*

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (Sen. The Hon. Clarence Rambharat):** All items of machinery and equipment owned by Caroni Green Limited have been transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries for use by the Ministry.

**CARIFTA Track and Field Championships Success  
(Holistic Development of Successful Athletes)**

**130. Mr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East)** asked the hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs:

In light of the Trinidad and Tobago's success at the 46<sup>th</sup> Flow CARIFTA Track and Field Championships, what are the Ministry's plans to assist in the holistic development of these successful athletes?

*The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:*

**The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Darryl Smith):** The Ministry of Sport has an existing sport development framework which assists these athletes through sport development initiatives funded via subventions provided by MSYA, to Sport National Governing Bodies (NGBs). The provision of funding is disbursed based on the following formula:

- High Performance - Maximum of 40% of the project cost
- Sport Development - Maximum of 60% of the project cost
- Provision of Administrative Support and Services - Maximum of 50% of the project cost
- Total Participation Growth Programme - Maximum of 60% of the project cost
- Capacity Building - Maximum of 50% of the project cost
- Discretionary - Maximum of 10% of the project cost

Additionally, within this framework, there exists supplementary systems and funding streams which are accessible by athletes, to improve their current abilities and capacities, such as the Elite Athlete Funding and Grant Funding Policies. The Ministry is currently reviewing its funding policies to develop a comprehensive Policy which will focus more on the developmental level for CARIFTA athletes by investing greater resources in their development.

The Ministry has a current initiative which is also supported by the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Committee (TTOC), the National Association of Athletics Administrations (NAAA's) and nine other NGB's, specifically geared

towards Long Term Athletic Development (LTAD), which speaks directly to holistic and long term development of our athletes. This initiative is ongoing and has borne fruits, as illustrated at the 46th Flow CARIFTA Track and Field Championships. Additionally the current review of the Draft National Sport Policy does advise that a holistic approach needs to be adopted towards the development of sport in Trinidad and Tobago, which the Ministry is taking into consideration.

Through the Elite Development and Performance Unit (EDPU) of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (SPORTT), Madam Speaker, the NAAA's has partnered with MSYA in the roll out and execution of the Youth Elite Program (YEP), for the provision of assistance in the holistic development of a selected group of junior elite Track and Field athletes. The EDPU, a high 13 performance area of SPORTT, has created an approach which takes a 360-degree approach to further developing prospective podium athletes, to elite status. The principal objectives of the EDPU in supporting the CARIFTA Track and Field Athletes are as follows:

- Monitoring and evaluating the development of a select group of Track and Field Junior elite athletes;
- Providing scientific, therapeutic and educational support to a select group of Junior Track and Field elite athletes and coaches, to improve overall athletic development; and
- Development of an optimal elite development framework for junior athletes.

This initiative seeks to provide specified Sport Science, Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation services to the athletes and coaches of the 'Junior Elite Project,' with the EDPU providing support services in the following areas:

- Strength and Conditioning
- Sport Psychology
- Sport Nutrition
- Sport and Exercise Science
- Physical Therapy
- Massage Therapy

Additional services will also be offered through the Business Development and Corporate Communications Units of SPORTT, to improve the overall athlete brand via:

- Social Media Etiquette;
- Financial Management and Planning;
- Dealing with media/media literacy; and

- Personal professional development.

Subsequent to the Team's return from the CARIFTA games, a very successful Sports Nutrition Workshop and a Sport Psychology Workshop were conducted by the EDPU with the team and other athletes, who are on the fringe of being selected for the National team.

**Ministry of Education Programme  
(ADD/ADHD Disorder)**

**138. Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan** (*Tabaquite*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

With respect to the commitments made in the response pursuant to Standing Order 43(2) to the Private Motion related to the Ministry of Education's programme for children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), could the Minister state:

- a) the list of programmes that have been implemented;
- b) the list of schools that benefitted from these programmes; and
- c) the number of teachers who have been trained since April 22, 2016 to identify students who suffer from ADD/ADHD?

*The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:*

List of one hundred and eighty (180) schools where interventions are conducted on a continuous basis by the Student Support Services Division of the Ministry of Education.

**Appendix to HOR Question No. 138(b) to the Minister of Education**

**Education Districts**

**Names of Schools Currently  
Serviced by Special Education  
Teachers**

Caroni

Agostini KPA Primary  
ASJA Boys' College, Charlieville  
Barataria South Secondary  
California Government Primary  
Carapichaima RC Primary  
Chaguanas Government Primary  
Chaguanas RC Primary  
Chaguanas South Secondary  
Charlieville Presbyterian Primary  
Couva AC Primary

**North Eastern**

Couva South Government Primary  
 Esperanza Presbyterian Primary  
 Exchange RC Primary  
 Freeport Hindu Primary  
 Longdenville Government Primary  
 Longdenville Presbyterian Primary  
 Mc Bean Hindu Primary  
 Mc Bean Presbyterian Primary  
 Milton Presbyterian Primary  
 Montrose Government Primary  
 Orange Valley Government Primary  
 Preysal Government Primary  
 Preysal Secondary  
 Seereeram Memorial Vedic Primary  
 Edinburgh Government Primary  
 Springvale Hindu Primary  
 St George's College  
 St. David's RC Primary  
 Warrenville Presbyterian Primary  
 Warrenville TIA Primary  
 Cumaca RC Primary  
 Cumana AC Primary  
 Cunapo RC (St. Francis) Primary  
 Grosvenor Presbyterian Primary  
 L'Anse Noire Moravian Primary  
 Lower Cumuto Primary  
 Manzanilla Government Primary  
 Matelot RC Primary  
 North Oropouche RC Primary  
 Rampanalagas RC Primary  
 Rampanalgas Government Primary  
 Sangre Grande Government Primary  
 Sangre Grande Hindu Primary  
 Sangre Grande SDA Primary  
 Upper Guaico RC Primary  
 Valencia RC Primary  
 Valencia South Government Primary  
 Belmont Boys' RC Primary

**North Eastern**

**Port of Spain & Environs**



Belmont Girls' RC Primary  
 Carenage Boys' Government Primary  
 Carenage Girls' Government Primary  
 Cocorite Government Primary  
 Crystal Stream Government Primary  
 Diamond Vale Government Primary  
 Diego Martin Boys' RC Primary  
 Diego Martin Girls' RC Primary  
 Diego Martin Government Primary  
 Hockett Baptist Primary  
 Laventille Boys' Government Primary  
 Laventille Girls' Government Primary  
 Morvant New Government Primary  
 Nelson Street Boys' RC Primary  
 Nelson Street Girls' RC Primary  
 Newtown Boys' RC Primary  
 Newtown Girls' RC Primary  
 Patna River Estate Government Primary

**Port of Spain & Environs**

Petit Valley Boys' RC Primary  
 Petit Valley Girls' RC Primary  
 Pt. Cumana RC Primary  
 Sacred Heart Girls' RC Primary  
 St. Agnes AC Primary  
 St. Dominic's RC Primary  
 Success RC Primary  
 St. Hilda's Government Primary  
 Tranquility Boys' Government

Primary

**South Eastern**

St. Mary's Government Primary  
 Elswick Presbyterian Primary  
 Iere Government Primary  
 Jordan Hill Presbyterian Primary  
 New Grant Government Primary  
 North Trace Government Primary  
 Princes Town ASJA Primary  
 Princes Town Presbyterian Primary  
 Princes Town RC Primary

**St. George East**

Sixth Company AC Primary  
 St. Michael's AC Primary  
 St. Stephen's AC Primary  
 William Webb Memorial Baptist  
 Primary  
 Bon Air Government Primary  
 El Socorro Central Primary  
 Arima Girls' Government Primary  
 Arima Girls' RC Primary  
 Arima North Secondary  
 Arima West Government  
 Arouca AC Primary  
 Arouca Government Primary  
 Barataria AC Primary  
 Barataria RC Primary  
 Blanchisseuse Government Primary  
 Bon Air Government Primary  
 Bourg Mulatresse RC Primary  
 Carapo RC Primary  
 Curepe AC Primary  
 Curepe Presbyterian Primary  
 D' Abadie Government Primary  
 Dinsley Trincity Government  
 Primary  
 El Dorado South Hindu Primary  
 El Dorado East Secondary  
 El Dorado West Secondary  
 El Socorro North Government  
 Primary  
 El Socorro South Government  
 Primary  
 Five Rivers Hindu Primary  
 Five Rivers Islamia Primary  
 La Horquetta North Government  
 Primary  
 La Horquetta South Government  
 Primary  
 Las Cuevas Government Primary

**St. Patrick's**

Maracas Presbyterian Primary  
 Maracas RC Primary  
 San Juan Boys' RC Primary  
 San Juan Boys Government Primary  
 San Juan Girls' RC Primary  
 San Juan Girls' Government Primary  
 San Juan SDA Primary  
 Santa Cruz Presbyterian Primary  
 Santa Cruz Presbyterian Primary  
 Santa Rosa Government Primary  
 St Augustine South Government  
 Primary  
 St Joseph Girls' RC Primary  
 St Mary's Anglican Primary  
 St. Joseph Boys' RC Primary  
 St. Joseph Government Primary  
 St. Pius Boys' RC Primary  
 Talparo RC Primary  
 Tunapuna Government Primary  
 Tunapuna Presbyterian Primary  
 Chatham Government Primary  
 Clarke Road Hindu Primary  
 Clarke Rochard Government Primary  
 Dayanand Memorial Vedic Primary  
 Dehli Road Hindu Primary  
 Egypt Village Government Primary  
 Erin Road Presbyterian Primary  
 Fanny Village Government Primary  
 Holy Name Convent Secondary  
 La Brea RC Primary  
 Morne Diablo RC Primary  
 Palo Seco Government Primary  
 Penal Government Primary  
 Penal Rock Hindu Primary  
 Penal Rock Presbyterian Primary  
 Point Fortin East Secondary  
 Rancho Quemado Government  
 Primary

*JSC Vision 2030 (Establishment of)*  
[HON. C. ROBINSON-REGIS]

*Wednesday, May 31, 2017*

	Salazar Trace Government Primary
	Santa Flora Anglican Primary
	Siparia Road Presbyterian Primary
	Siparia Union Presbyterian Primary
	Southern Central AC Primary
	South Oropouche Government Primary
	South Oropouche RC Primary
	St Francis Erin RC Primary
	St. Brigid's Girls' RC Primary
	St. Christopher's Anglican Primary
	St. Dominic's (Penal) RC Primary
	Barrackpore Vedic Primary
	Barrackporre ASJA Primary
	Claxton Bay Jr AC Primary
	Cocoyea Government Primary
	Debe Secondary
	Gasparillo Government Primary
	Grant Memorial Primary
<b>Victoria</b>	La Romain Government Primary
	Marabella South Secondary
	St. Benedict's College
	Naparima Boys' College
	San Fernando Boys' Government Primary
	San Fernando SDA Primary
	Ste. Madeline Government Primary
	Mt. Pleasant Government Primary
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>

<b>Name of Workshop</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>No. of Teachers Trained</b>
<b>Psycho-Education Evaluation for Special Educators</b>	August 8-12, 2016	20
<b>Multidisciplinary Approach to Psycho-Educational Assessment</b>	August 29-30, 2016 September 1, 2 & 9, 2016	18

*JSC Vision 2030 (Establishment of)**Wednesday, May 31, 2017*

<b>Understanding the Learner: Sensitisation for Beginning Teachers 2016-2017</b>	December 1, 2016	128
<b>Induction Programme for Beginning Teachers 2016-2017</b>	February 3, 8, 10, 20, 22, 2017 March 8 & 10, 2017	304
<b>Workshop “Understanding and Teaching Special Needs” Training for Special Education</b>	May 13, 2017	15
<b>Total</b>		485