

Mr. L. DesVignes (Death)

Friday, August 10, 1990

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 10, 1990.

The House met at 10.01 a.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair.*]

**MR. LEO DESVIGNES
(DEATH)**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is with deep regret and sadness that I draw to your attention the untimely passing of the Member for Diego Martin Central.

The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): Mr. Speaker, hon. Members, it is with great sadness that we on this side of the House mourn the death of a colleague and friend who died under the most tragic circumstances.

We have lost a colleague, a friend and a Member of this House. His wife has lost a husband and his children, a father. His constituency has lost a leader and a representative, and the people of this country have lost one of their representatives duly elected in free and fair elections.

Leo was a quiet unassuming man, both as a person and as a representative for Diego Martin Central. He worked tirelessly with and for the people of his constituency, and in the Office of the Prime Minister where he was a Parliamentary Secretary. In the constituency he devoted a lot of his time to his people, and in the Prime Minister's Office he devoted much of his time to the complaints of ordinary citizens from all over the country who came to get redress sometimes when the normal procedures would not allow them to get that redress quickly.

In addition, he performed his other duties tirelessly, effortlessly almost, and without asking for anything in return.

On behalf of all the Members, this side of the House, we offer our condolences to his widow and his family, to all his constituents, and to all his relatives who must mourn his passing. It is an untimely passing. We have lost a good soul and we pray for him.

Thank you very much.

Mr. L. DesVignes (Death)

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Mr. Morris Marshall (*Port-of-Spain East*): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official Opposition, and on my own behalf, I wish to join hands with the Leader of Government Business and with all Members of Parliament, as well, on this occasion, in expressing our sadness, our regret on the passing of one of our colleagues in this House.

There is no doubt that representative DesVignes was a very pleasant person and we had a very cordial relationship; a person of strong character who lived up to his commitment to the people. It is extremely sad that he died in the way he did.

On behalf of my colleagues, and on my own behalf, I express our condolences to his widow, to the other members of his family and indeed to the constituents of Diego Martin Central. We are extremely saddened by his passing. We pray for his soul, and we know that he will find peace where he is at this particular point in time.

10.10 a.m.

SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I now appoint a committee headed by the Hon. Speaker to make recommendations to this honourable House of ways and means that this House can honour our late colleague. The committee will comprise the following:

The Honourable Speaker

Mr. Theodore Guerra

Mrs. Margaret Hector

Mr. Raymond Pallackdharrysingh

Mr. Morris Marshall

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we are meeting this morning under rather curious circumstances. I welcome those Members who are present and who undoubtedly underwent great agony, pain and ordeal when the House last met at the Red House. I expect that the relevant authorities will assist the Hon. Speaker in bringing the facilities that are normally used by Members of Parliament up to a standard that will allow us to resume in the normal way.

The Chamber, if I may say so, is in no condition for us to occupy to deliberate on the business of the state. I am also at this stage requesting the Ministry of External Affairs and International Trade and more particularly, the hon. Minister of External Affairs and International Trade, to invite members of the diplomatic corps who may be interested in looking at the damage that has been done. We will welcome them at 10.00 o'clock on Monday morning to view the upper floor of the Red House.

We have done everything possible to get your Order Papers to you and if there are those of you who have not received Order Papers, it is not for want of trying on the part of the usually dedicated and committed staff of the Parliament. I expect by now each one of you will have a copy of the Order Paper which contains the normal run of business, but I seek your indulgence. We will go through the Order Paper but we shall be dealing at today's sitting with motions Nos. 3 and 4 which are contained under "Government Business" on pages 3 and 4 of the Order Paper. We proceed.

PAPER LAID

Statement of the President under Section 9(1) of the Constitution setting out the specific grounds on which the decision to declare the existence of a State of Emergency was based. [*The Attorney General (Hon. Anthony Smart)*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Trevor Sudama (Oropouche):

San Fernando Bye Pass Road

49. With respect to the dualling of the San Fernando Bye Pass Road from the Mon Repos Roundabout, could the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization state:

- (a) What date this work was commenced?
- (b) What is the length of the roadway which has been completed to date?
- (c) What is the expenditure to date on this work?

Solomon Hochoy Highway

50. With respect to the collapse of the northbound section of the Solomon Hochoy Highway at Claxton Bay, could the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization state:

- (a) When did the roadway collapse?
- (b) Whether the Government has any plans whatsoever for the repair of the roadway?
- (c) Whether he is aware of the very dangerous and hazardous condition of the roadway and grave risk it poses to motorists?

Naparima/Mayaro Road (Resurfacing)

51. With respect to resurfacing work on the Naparima/Mayaro Road and the San Fernando-Siparia-Erin Road, could the hon. Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization inform the House as follows:

- (a) The sums expended under Development Expenditure and Recurrent Expenditure on each highway for the years 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990?
- (b) The distance of roadway resurfaced on each of the above highways for the years 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990?

San Fernando General Hospital

52. Does the Ministry of Health have any immediate plans for the extension of the San Fernando General Hospital in order to have increased bed space available to relieve the chronic overcrowding at that institution?

Income Tax (Collections and Refunds)

53. Could the hon. Minister of Finance state the total of income tax collected from and refunds made to individual taxpayers in each of the years 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 with respect to the previous years' income?

Questions, by leave, deferred.

STATE OF EMERGENCY

The Attorney General (Hon. Anthony Smart): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House take note of the statement of the President under section 9(1) of the Constitution setting out the specific grounds on which the decision to declare the existence of a state of emergency was based.

Mr. Speaker, as I commence, I wish to read into the record the statement of His Excellency the President. It reads as follows:

"OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
TRINIDAD
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT UNDER SECTION 9(1)
OF THE CONSTITUTION SETTING OUT THE SPECIFIC
GROUNDS ON WHICH THE DECISION TO DECLARE THE
EXISTENCE OF A STATE OF PUBLIC EMERGENCY WAS BASED

At approximately 5.30 p.m. on 27th July, 1990, an attack was launched on the Police Headquarters at St. Vincent Street, Port-of-Spain, which resulted in major damage to the building.

At approximately the same time, during a sitting of the House of Representatives, a band of armed men threateningly entered the Chamber of the Red House, Port-of-Spain, and violently seized the Honourable Prime Minister and several members of the Cabinet. Several other parliamentarians, public servants and members of the public were assaulted in the melée or detained. Many of these persons including the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Minister of Justice and National Security were taken hostage by the assailants who took control of the Red House. Some of these persons, including the Honourable Prime Minister, sustained personal injuries.

At approximately 5.30 p.m. on the 27th July, 1990, another band of armed men forced their way into the premises of Trinidad and Tobago Television at 11A Maraval Road, Port-of-Spain, where they seized several

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of the persons and detained them as hostages. These armed men retained control of the television station.

As a consequence of these events I was satisfied that the public safety was endangered to an extent that warranted the declaration of a state of public emergency.

s/ J. Emman Carter
Acting President.

30th July, 1990"

As you are aware, under the Constitution, this statement by His Excellency was required to be delivered to you within three days after the declaration of the state of emergency. This was in fact done. Under the Constitution also, the House of Representatives is required within 15 days of the declaration of the state of emergency to meet, to agree to continue the state of emergency by a simple majority, otherwise the proclamation would lapse.

This is the reason we are here this morning. As you have indicated, there is another motion, motion No. 4 on the Order Paper, which deals with exactly that, a motion to continue the state of emergency for a period of three months.

10.20 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I commence by expressing the horror and I think the horror of all of us here today, no matter what party we belong to, that we feel by this band of armed men invading the Parliament while it was in session. There can be no worse attack on the freedom of all of us in this country. It is a symbolic, horrendous act against all the people of this country; it has absolutely nothing to do with partisan politics. I wish that all of us in this country would see this attack in those terms. I know that the Member for Port-of-Spain East understands this and I repeat, I wish that all of us would see it as an attack on the people and the freedoms in this country which have been enshrined for many years; an attack on the democracy of this country.

Parliament is a symbol of free speech, it is the place where the elected representatives of the people go to make laws and to make representations on behalf of the people of this country. This Parliament as we are sitting today is still under siege, we do not have the benefit of sitting in our traditional place, we sit here with the public gallery empty and with soldiers and policemen all around us. We the people of Trinidad and Tobago do not want this and we are prepared to

fight to the end to ensure that this never happens again in the history of our country.

These men would have us scrap the codes and tenets by which we have lived; these men would set us back to the law of the jungle. Our country today is at the crossroads, we have to decide whether we will lay down our lives for the freedoms which we hold dear or whether we would allow this country to be ruled from the barrel of a gun. These hellish and brutish men who perpetrated this surrealistic act on all of us refused to submit to the democratic process. We have a system here of free and fair elections. Since independence the people of Trinidad and Tobago have exercised their right to elect their representatives and also to vote them out. We want to continue this way, but these men would have us ruled by the gun, they want to be the players and the referees, they refused to submit to the political process and we will have none of that.

As I said earlier on, the issue is not whether we agree with the Government's policies or not, the issue is whether we want the democratic principles by which we have lived to continue to operate. The issue is not whether some hostages were treated well or not. No person held against his will for a period of five days under the barrel of a gun, with the threat of death at anytime can be said to be treated well, no matter how pleasant and engaging the exchanges between the captive and the captor. We must understand that. We have to understand that.

What about the innocent people who died? With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I will refer to them by name, those who died in and around the Red House, innocent people. We have paid our respects to our close friend and colleague, Leo DesVignes, Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central, a more innocent and humble man it is difficult to find; what of Mervyn Teague, the Government Broadcasting Unit representative who was simply doing his job?

What about ASP Roger George? I saw in the newspaper yesterday that he was referred to as the "mounted policeman on the grey horse or the white horse." I did not know him personally, but he again was simply doing his job in the Parliament. What of Lorraine Caballero, clerical assistant at the Registrar General's Department? While I was held up in the Red House for 2 1/2 hours I heard her groans outside the room where I was captive; I heard her groans for a few seconds and then I heard them no more. I do not know who she was, I do not believe I ever met her, but when this horror was all over it was discovered that her body was lying just a few feet outside the room in which I was holed up for 2 1/2 hours.

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What about George Francis, driver for the hon. Member for Laventille, Mrs. Muriel Donawa-McDavidson? He also passed away, an innocent man. Malcolm Basanta, he was an estate constable attached to the Registrar General's Department. Again, I did not know him but he died simply doing his job. Then there is Solomon McLeod, SRP at Police Headquarters, who from reports was shot in cold blood many times, he fell and a car was driven over him. What about Arthur Guiseppi whom I knew? A simple man who seldom missed the sessions of Parliament sitting in the public gallery, a poor, simple man committed to our democracy, interested in our democracy who would find time to come and listen to his parliamentarians talk sense sometimes and talk nonsense at other times, but he was always there.

Then there is the unidentified man found in Woodford Square, I am sure again a simple man fleeing from bullets. There is also the unidentified body found at TTT, we do not know whether that body was captor or captive. So far there are no reports of the deaths of any of those brutish men who invaded the Red House and TTT. We have to understand that. Many men and women died, have shed their blood essentially for this country. So let us not be distracted. Let us not for a moment, misunderstand the severity, the enormity, the horror, of what transpired at the Red House on Friday, July 27, 1990.

10.30 a.m.

What of the other persons who died at different sites? From all reports there are some 25 persons who died in all. Then the mayhem and destruction that took place in the city, what of that? Do we want that? I know that we, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, did not want it, and do not want it.

Mr. Speaker, we all know of the hostages who were held at TTT and at the Red House, but little publicity has been given to the fact that there were some 10 to 12 hostages also taken at Radio Trinidad, including a name that we all know, a radio announcer, Edison Carr. They came out of the building on Sunday morning after the invaders abandoned it. We have reason to believe that Radio Trinidad was abandoned by the invaders because we took steps to blow out the transmission at the station so that no broadcast could come from it. These men scampered over a wall on Sunday morning and fled the scene. So we must remember them also.

During this period we saw the character of the people of Trinidad and Tobago tested to its mettle and we saw great acts of heroism. We saw the army, well

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prepared, in position to go tactical, to use the phrase that I have come to know, having spent a few days with them at Camp Ogden—"prepared to go tactical", in other words, to have a military solution to the problem from Friday night. As a matter of fact, when I was leaving the Red House, in the area at the intersection of Chacon Street and Independence Square, where I found my way at about 8.30 p.m., PTSC buses were already in place across the intersections to cordon off the area. I found it amazing that within two and a half hours we saw the army and members of the PTSC putting themselves in action to defend the democracy and the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The army showed great heroism and strength, the police also, the coast guard, the fire service, the prison service, because they, too, at one stage felt that they might have come under siege. The spiritual leaders did a tremendous job on that night to keep the spirits of the people up and to keep them praying; the public servants; the members and employees of the statutory boards and state enterprises; the leaders in business, the ordinary citizens.

I use the word, public servants, members of the state enterprises and state corporations and public authorities to include everyone. It would be difficult to itemize all and sundry. The ordinary citizens, the members of staff of 610 Radio who kept the station going and who gave me strength and confidence, because when I eventually found my way to freedom I did not know what was going on. I did not know whether the entire country had been taken. But when I heard 610 Radio defiantly broadcasting in all of this, I said to myself, 610 is but a few metres away from where all of this is taking place. If they have not been able to capture them, it means they have been curtailed. So that 610 Radio gave me strength to continue.

The hostages themselves showed tremendous courage, were tremendously valiant. What of the 50-odd citizens, including yourself, Mr. Speaker, who rallied and came to Camp Ogden and performed the most heroic tasks, with the greatest of risks to themselves? What of them? I am talking about the Friday night and on Saturday. A time will come when these civilians will be identified by name.

As I have said before, the army—and I witnessed it—showed discipline and restraint, in the face of the greatest provocation. That, to me, was admirable and heroic. As I have said, they were in a position to go tactical since the Friday night and to use a term of the army and to, as they say, "take out" the buildings since Friday night.

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10.40 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, there has been concern expressed by the population about certain documents; about an alleged "major points of agreement" between the hostages and the hostage-takers, and an alleged resignation letter by the hon. Prime Minister, and an alleged undertaking by the 16 hostage parliamentarians, including the deceased Leo Des Vignes, to support Minister Dookeran as Prime Minister, and an alleged amnesty for the hostage-takers.

There are eight points which I wish to make, which I hope will allay the fears of the population on this issue.

- (i) Documents were in fact written during the early part of the period that the hostages were in captivity, that is to say on the Friday night and early Saturday morning.
- (ii) No agreements arrived at under the circumstances of stress, duress and captivity to which the hostage parliamentarians were subjected can be binding.
- (iii) They were tied and bound like crabs; some were beaten and they were all constantly under the barrels of loaded guns that had already killed people.

The Ministers who were outside the Red House were also under tremendous stress and duress. Mr. Speaker, we had the lives of our fellow parliamentarians—it does not matter which party—and other hostages at the Red House, TTT and Radio Trinidad in our hands, and whether they lived or died depended on a tenuous and ongoing assessment of the situation in conjunction with the military and depended on our having to take very delicate and vital decisions under conditions of stress and duress.

- (iv) Quite apart from the legal effect of the document, morally it cannot be binding.

Mr. Speaker, if your daughter was in fact kidnapped by bandits at gunpoint and as a condition for her release you were required to agree to hand over your savings in a particular bank, and if you agreed and she was released, would you then have an obligation to hand over those funds? Surely not.

- (v) The fifth point of consideration is, even if the situation was normal and regular and there was no duress, the amnesty document as written would have no legal effect.

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I will say no more on this lest it be subject to legal proceedings at a later stage.

- (vi) The discussions between the brutish captors and the negotiator Colonel Theodore were not static, nor were the events that have unfolded between Saturday and the eventual release of all the hostages on Wednesday static.

Things were changing all the time. New demands were made including a demand that a certain person should be Minister of National Security. What is factual, and that is important, is that the events culminated in the freedom of the hostages and the unconditional surrender of the captors.

- (vii) The hostages were not in a position to negotiate their own release. They were unaware of all that was happening outside the Parliament Chamber and TTT.
- (viii) We on the outside had the benefit of the best available advice on hostage negotiations. I assure hon. Members and the public at large, that we had the benefit of the best advice available on hostage negotiations.

Part of that advice was that Colonel Theodore was to talk strictly with the spokesmen for the captors and no one else. After Canon Clarke dropped out of the picture Colonel Theodore was to be the only person to speak to the captors from the outside. I want to pay tribute to Canon Knolly Clarke for the role he played in all of this. He risked his life to go to the Red House Chamber. He was very scared but he agreed to go. Shaking like a leaf at one time, but he went and the population needs to know that.

It is now history that both hostages and hostage-takers made several telephone calls around the same time, to persons outside TTT and the Red House, although efforts were made to cut communications between TTT and the Red House with the outside world, and to establish a single direct link between the negotiator and the captors. Mr. Speaker, I regret to say that this contact with the outside world by the hostages and hostage-takers made the situation very perilous at times.

I shall now pay credit to Radio 610 and in particular, Dennis McCommie because when we were losing control of the situation, he followed instructions which were given at that time in terms of what should be broadcasted and what should not be broadcasted.

Mr. Speaker, it is also now history that the hostages taken at TTT, Radio Trinidad and Red House were safely returned with the regrettable exception of

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Member of Parliament, Mr. Leo Des Vignes. A massacre and further bloodshed was avoided.

10.50 a.m.

The crisis, while it has been contained, is not yet over. The police and the army have a considerable amount of work to do still. I am advised that the Director of Public Prosecutions is doing his work. We have all been terribly inconvenienced during this period of our history. We will continue to be inconvenienced for sometime to come, but this is a small price to pay for the freedom which we all cherish.

I call on everyone to exercise restraint in these times. The press has a particular role to play during this period. I call on the press particularly to exercise restraint and to be responsible in this situation. I have no doubt that they will meet the challenge. These are perilous times and the information that the press gives must not be tailored to inflame, agitate or frighten. I have no doubt that the press will meet this challenge. A very heavy burden is now placed on the shoulders of the press.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that what I have said is but a drop in the ocean of information that will be divulged as we go along.

I have no doubt that all Members of this Parliament see and understand the need for the continuation of the state of emergency for the period of three months, as we have moved in the motion.

I trust that I may not have to speak again on the next motion in the hope that all that I have said is sufficient for the Members to understand the need.

As I end, I congratulate all the people of Trinidad and Tobago for the tremendous resilience, patriotism and bravery shown during the period of the crisis, up to now, and which I am sure the people of Trinidad and Tobago will continue to show.

I have faith in the people. We in this Parliament have faith in the people, and the people have faith in themselves. I have no doubt that we will come out of this crisis victorious and a stronger people. I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando East*): Mr. Speaker, we meet today in very unusual circumstances. The statement of His Excellency, the President,

which is the motion that is now before us outlines very clearly a series of circumstances that developed on Friday, July 27, 1990, which gave rise eventually to the declaration of a state of emergency in Trinidad and Tobago.

As a Member of the Opposition party, I, for sometime, together with my colleagues had been indicating to the population that this was a possibility and that it was not without its political implications, but little did I know that when such a state of emergency was eventually declared I, and my colleagues on this side of the House, would be in full agreement with that declaration. If we have any reservation at all, it is that the state of emergency might have been declared too late.

I do not wish to be very controversial at all today, but I noticed that this sitting of the House was advertised as very short and clearly that is a statement of intent on the part of someone—whichever it is. I do not propose to unduly delay hon. Members.

It is now clear to us—I am sure it is clear to the Government and to the national community—that whenever a situation develops where your police headquarters has been attacked and Members of your Parliament have been seized, including the Prime Minister and Members of the Cabinet, those actions constitute grounds for an immediate declaration of a state of emergency and the attendant 24-hour curfew that should have gone with it at that time.

The hon. Attorney General said not too long ago that the situation in fact has been a very fluid one and, therefore, on a day to day basis you make adjustments.

Before going much further, I want to associate myself with some of the remarks of the hon. Attorney General. In particular, I wish to place on record the condolences of those of us on this side of the House, and I feel confident that I speak for all members of the party. We deeply regret the death of all those who died, particularly, our colleague, the Member for Diego Martin Central, the hon. Leo Des Vignes. My colleague, the Member for Port-of-Spain East has already spoken on that issue and one does not wish, as it were, to repeat.

11.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, permit me at the same time to place on the record the deep gratitude of those of us on this side of the House for the activities of the police, the Defence Force—the protective services on the whole—the journalists, and everyone who contributed in one way or the other to ensure that public order and

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safety was preserved to the extent it was possible under the circumstances that prevailed at that time.

I wish also to place on the record our condolences to the families of those who died—all of them—their friends, and all those who feel bereaved as a consequence of the passing of those who died.

The hon. Attorney General sought this morning to explain a number of issues that he identified as issues that constitute a cause and source of concern to the population of Trinidad and Tobago at this time. I am not at all in a particularly combative mood this morning. I am in a mood of conciliation and, therefore, I do not wish to go into the details of a number of other issues which arise, but I think it would be appropriate to raise just one or two of them.

I took very careful note of what the hon. Attorney General said when he stated that those members of the Cabinet who were on the outside who were not held against their will, had the benefit of the best advice available in negotiations with hostages. The question that has not been answered is whether the best advice available was given to a cohesive group of people who were working in the interest of the country. That is a question that has to be answered. The question assumes a particular importance when one takes note of the headline of the *Express* of Tuesday: "Atwell and Myers—we are in charge".

It reminds me of an incident that took place in the United States of America sometime ago where the President of the United States was shot—President Reagan. I think it was Alexander Haig, the Secretary of State at the time, who said: "I am in charge here." Whether he was right or wrong, I do not express any view on that at all. What is required in those circumstances is for somebody whose authority is accepted to take control of that situation. I ask the question: did such a person exist and if such a person existed, who was the person involved? That is a question that we in the Opposition wish to know, because it has implications for the decision-making process. This was another concern of the people of Trinidad and Tobago; because of the fact that there may not have been a clear authority structure, the decision-making process was consequently slowed down with consequences that one need not explain at this time.

I am merely saying that those are questions which have arisen and if it is that hon. Members of the Government do not wish to listen to what the Opposition has to say, I will say something about that a little later. I am not in a combative

mood and I do not propose to go into the details, but the questions have to be raised.

It is the Attorney General—I wish to compliment him—who took the step this morning to seek to answer some of the questions that undoubtedly occupied the attention of members of our population who have been looking at this situation closely. The hon. Attorney General indicated this morning—and I am very grateful for his explanation and clarification—that the captives were not in a position to negotiate their own release. That is the statement of the Attorney General this morning. It is a statement with which I am in full agreement.

What I do not understand is why such an explanation came so late and why the explanation has only come after members of the Government made public appearances on national television, giving impressions that were very different from these. One of the problems that the population has with the Government is that it believes the Government is not always as forthright as it ought to be. That is the problem. A credibility gap develops when these things are not clearly explained and when these issues are pursued in a manner, in a state of public emergency, that gives the population the impression that our public media is being used for purposes that could be seen in some quarters as political.

This is no time to apportion blame but I will be remiss in my responsibility if I did not draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, and through you, the attention of hon. Members, to the Budget Speech of 1988, because the question that has to be answered is—how could a group of people in the country have amassed the quantity of arms and ammunition that they amassed? It is reported one million bullets. I do not know whether it is true or not. The newspaper is the only source of information that I have. What that means is one bullet to every man, woman and child in this country, a tremendous quantity indeed. How could that have taken place? How could an attack, the nature of which was planned, be in fact planned, apparently with the authorities of the country having absolutely no knowledge? That was a question I was hoping the hon. Attorney General would have addressed this morning. When the answers are not forthcoming to questions of this nature, a lot of room is left for speculation, which in many instances, is not correct.

I draw the attention of hon. Members of this Parliament to page 30 of the cyclostyled version of the Budget Speech of 1988:

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"Several features of the traditional pattern of expenditure on the Development Programme need to be re-oriented to accord with the current economic environment. Whereas in the past there has been noticeable concentration on expenditure relating to community and social services, general administration, public order and safety, which are not self-financing, the present situation requires, in the short term rather more emphasis on projects and programmes which will directly stimulate a resurgence of economic activity."

11.10 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I have had cause in the past to indicate that there is this thinking, this dollars and cents mentality, this accounting approach to the administration of the affairs of the country that led to an increase in crime subsequent to this decision being taken in the budget for 1988 as outlined by the Minister of Finance who at the time was the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. I ask the question this morning: are the logical conclusions of the dollars and cents mentality, a curtailing of expenditure on law and order because it is not self-financing, the events of July 27, the declaration of a state of emergency and a curfew and the meeting of Parliament in the Central Bank building rather than in the Chamber of the Red House which is the place allocated for that purpose? Is this the logical consequence of that kind of thinking? I ascribe no blame, I merely ask the question.

There is also the question of accountability. Questions are being raised. The Attorney General, to his credit, sought to answer a number of questions of concern, however, other questions need to be answered and I sincerely hope that somebody on the Government side would seek to answer some of these questions this morning. You may not wish to answer them now, but the questions are raised nonetheless.

There is a National Security Council in this country chaired by the Hon. Prime Minister, I would like somebody on the Government bench to tell me and this Parliament, and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, what role did this Council play in the preservation of the security of this state. What is the role of the National Security Council? What is the role of the Minister of National Security? What is the position in respect of accountability? Who is accountable to the people of Trinidad and Tobago for the tremendous lapse in security that this development on July 27 represented? I sympathize with the police because they must have had a very difficult job indeed to deal with people who were

taking the decision that since law and order does not generate revenue itself, it is to be accorded a lower priority in the scheme of priorities, in the hierarchy of priorities that the Government will establish as it seeks to allocate the scarce financial resources to the various areas of governmental activity.

There are still some other questions that have to be answered and they relate to the proclamation itself. What kind of political activity is permissible under this state of emergency? It is not clear because the national community heard a report of a meeting of the National Council of the ruling party held in very salubrious surroundings at the Trinidad Hilton, we heard a report of the deliberations of such a meeting. It is that the National Council of the ruling party—the equivalent of the General Council of the People's National Movement now in opposition and the equivalent body of the United National Congress and other political parties in the country—and bodies like it are permitted to meet and continue to conduct their business? I hope the Attorney General would clarify, we do not know. Is it that party units, whatever you call them, party branches of political parties are permitted under this proclamation of a state of emergency to continue their work? I am not in a position to say, the matter is not clear. Can constituencies hold their conferences as they would normally do at this time of the year under this state of emergency? That is not clear. What it seems to talk about is outdoor and indoor meetings. It talks more about that than it does about what is permitted in indoor meetings and I hope the Attorney General would clarify all of these issues as we continue to debate this matter.

A word about the Parliament staff. This year represents my twentieth year in this Parliament and I have been associated with members of the staff for quite some time. I know that they have had to work under very adverse conditions, the public does not necessarily appreciate the risks to which those people are exposed. My heart goes out to the Acting Clerk of the House who was present on Friday, July 27 when that unfortunate intrusion on the democracy of Trinidad and Tobago took place. I empathize with him and all the members of the parliamentary staff and through him I hope that these sentiments are conveyed to the staff of Parliament.

The People's National Movement has sought to be very responsible in a period of public emergency, recognizing that notwithstanding our constitutional responsibility to show the other side, this is the basis of our parliamentary democracy and even if we in the Opposition have not been kept advised of the critical aspects of what is taking place in the country—and I am not asking to be

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kept advised at all—what we have done is to make our statements and we tried to be as responsible as possible, seeking to avoid at any time doing anything that could prejudice either the security of this state or what we understood to have been very delicate negotiations that were taking place.

I draw your attention to the third statement we put out, where we made it absolutely clear then and we wish to make it absolutely clear again, that the PNM would be no party to any arrangement that is not born out of a love of democracy. We would be no party to any interim arrangement, of a small group of people seeking to impose their will on the population. We would be no party to that. I reiterate on behalf of the party which, for the time being, I have the honour to lead, that we stand for democracy and it is only through the democratic process that the PNM seeks to have some opportunity to provide services to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We make that point absolutely clear.

I empathize with the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the hon. Minister of Justice and National Security and all other Members of Parliament who were subjected to the unfortunate circumstances that took place on July 27. There are lessons that we could all learn from this, not the least of which is that humility must never be considered as a sign of weakness. It is going to be the end of many political careers where politicians do not understand that arrogance is something that this population does not wish to see; it is a quality that this population does not wish to see demonstrated and displayed by the people they put in public office.

11.20 a.m.

We take note of the statement of His Excellency the President, which led to the declaration of the state of emergency and I assure you that at the appropriate stage we will also support the extension of this proclamation for a period of three months.

Mr. Basdeo Panday (*Couva North*): Mr. Speaker, having heard the Attorney General and the Leader of the Opposition, all I can say is that with a Government like that in power and an Opposition like that in office, God help this country. Together they will conspire to paper the cracks for the sake of convenience. They will behave as though they belong to a mutual admiration society. I am shocked to hear the Leader of the Opposition say this is no time to apportion blame.

Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to speak on this motion because this is merely to take note, as I see it, but the Attorney General decided that he will go into an explanation of something on which I intended to speak when we come to the other motion. He, having raised it here, I must deal with it now. But I could not help being tremendously disappointed in the way the Leader of the Opposition has responded to the tragedy that this Government has inflicted upon this nation.

Mr. Speaker: Because of the unusual nature of this sitting I think I omitted to get from hon. Members an understanding that we are going to deal with the debate on the resolution that is before the House and we will just go through motion No. 4.

Mr. Panday: Mr. Speaker, I am marginalized both inside this House and outside. I am never consulted on anything.

Mr. Speaker: I am now consulting you.

Mr. Panday: I do not know, Mr. Speaker. Tell me, so that I shall know when I am about to speak.

Mr. Speaker: Shall we proceed, please.

Mr. Panday: Shall we be debating the extension speech, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: That is the question I was asking. Since both would deal with the same subject matter and I myself would like that we should have a short sitting, taking all these things into consideration, I am asking whether we can deal with the subject matter under motion no. 3, the resolution.

Mr. Panday: Well it is news to me, Mr. Speaker. If I had known I would not have spoken at this stage. Maybe someone will condescend to asking our opinion about matters relating to this House in the future. However, I will continue.

I want to tell the Government and the Leader of the Opposition, today is not the time to make reference to budget speech. Mr. Speaker, the other side is not prepared to face the facts of this issue but to paper it over. The question is not how the guns came into the country. We all know how the guns came into the country. They were smuggled in. They must be smuggled in. If they came through the customs then they would have had documents. The question is not how they came in. If they came in illegally, it is because they were smuggled in. If they came in legally, they would come in through the customs. The question is:

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why would anyone want to have those kinds of guns in their possession? That is the issue. The issue is accountability.

The Leader of the Opposition would agree with the Government to impose a police state on this country. That is the way he speaks; that we should agree to an imposition of a police state. Nobody is tackling the real issue in this nation, that is, the issue of alienation. They have alienated the people in this country. They have alienated them to the point where people will feel that democracy is not operating. My friend from the Opposition stated that he is for democracy. He does not seem to understand the difference between democracy and constitutionality. What he really means is that he will not be a party to the removal of the Government by unconstitutional means. Does he really mean democracy? Do they practise democracy? Is that the Government that the people of this country voted into office on December 15, 1986? Is that democracy?

Mr. Speaker, let me deal with the point that was raised by the hon. Attorney General. We will deal with democracy later on. The Attorney General went to lengths to talk about an agreement. He said he wanted to make about eight or nine points, and even in making them, he seeks to deceive. I took verbatim notes of what he was saying. "Documents were in fact written between Friday and Saturday." The next statement: "No agreements arrived at under duress can be binding."

The question which the nation is asking is: Was there an agreement? They would not have asked that had the Prime Minister not sought to lionize himself—as the Leader of the Opposition aptly puts it—to go on television and ingratiate himself as some great hero, when in fact there was such an important thing as negotiations taking place to which he made no reference whatever. That is the issue. So that the first question he should come to the House with, is not to come and say documents were in fact written, the question is: Were agreements reached? That is the first question. Tell the country. Did you reach an agreement at any time at all? Because you see, the implications of this are going to be very serious. To come and say no agreement arrived at under duress can be binding, the Ministers outside the House were also under duress. The issue about this agreement is not whether it is binding or not. That is a matter for the courts to decide. The courts will determine. If perchance there is a trial, people are charged and people are put on trial. I imagine they will have defence lawyers. If they have defence lawyers, I imagine this matter will be raised. Whether in fact there was an agreement that is binding or not binding, is a matter for the courts. We are not

concerned with that here. What we are concerned about is the political implications of what took place in the Parliament on that night. That is the issue. They must not hide from that. They cannot hide from that. To hide from that is to treat the people of this nation as though we were all children, not deserving of respect and to be treated as adults. This is a political implication.

11.30 a.m.

He said:

". . . having to take very delicate and vital decisions apart from the illegal effects of the documents, they cannot be binding."

This is not the issue. The first issue we have to decide in this House is the political issue. And the political issue—after all this bravado is over, that the Prime Minister claims he exhibited—is, did he enter into negotiations with his captors? If he did, why did he? That is the issue. If he did enter into negotiations, did he intend while conducting these negotiations, to deceive? Those are the important things. Was this a ruse?

Dr. Tewarie: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. Member give way? Is the hon. Member really taking the position that that is the most important issue in the country at this time?

Mr. Panday: The most important issue in the country is whether they should stay in office—it has been for a very long time.

Dr. Tewarie: The people will decide that, not you.

Mr. Panday: Of course the people will decide that.

Mr. Speaker: Order please. Let us proceed.

Mr. Panday: The Attorney General sought to raise it. It was so important that it formed the major part of his speech, but it is not important to reply. That is the arrogance with which they have brought this country to its knees. That is what they have done.

Mr. Speaker: Shall we proceed?

Mr. Panday: Yes, Mr. Speaker. They must tell the country: Did the Prime Minister or any one of them enter into negotiation or begin to negotiate? What were the intentions when they were negotiating? Did they intend to deceive? Was it their strategy of saying we will negotiate in order to get our of there, once

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we get out we will renege on it? They must say these things and do not call upon us to ask whether we want to implement them.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you have seen this morning's newspaper: "‘Worthless document’ says Hudson-Phillip". If Mr. Hudson-Phillips wants to throw his hat in the ring that is his business, that is not mine. If he thinks the PNM is ready for burial that is his business, not mine. But when he comes and attacks us that is something else. *[Interruption]* He asks whether we want to implement them. Are we in power? Did we create the situation in the Red House? Did we negotiate? How dare he ask? He has marginalized me. He could not hear me but I heard him deceived and betrayed us to the people of this country. He is a traitor of the highest order.

Mr. Speaker: Order please. Let us proceed with the Member's contribution.

Mr. Panday: They brought this nation to where it is by their treachery. Mr. Speaker, what happened in the Red House did not begin on Friday, July 27, it began in February, 1988, when they divided the nation and alienated the population. That is when it began. They must not escape that. It is said that there is no need to cry over spilt milk. That is true. But somebody has to mop it up. You may not cry over it but somebody has to clean up the mess and ensure that it does not happen again.

When the hon. Attorney General sought to expand on his knowledge of the law and talked about hostages not being in a position to negotiate their own release, this is the legal aspect of it, that is a matter for the court. I do not care whether they had the best advice or not; they have brought this nation to where it is today, and they must take full responsibility for it.

Mr. Speaker, what I fear most of all is that the situation would be used to introduce a police state. They have a history of vindictiveness, hate, spite and malice and any government built upon hate, spite and malice comes to the ruinous end to which they are bringing this nation. They spent four years blaming the last Government for their failure to perform. Every act is an act of hate, spite and bitterness.

I should like the Attorney General to leave the legal aspect of it to the court and answer the questions: were there negotiations? Where they agreed to? What were their motives when they were negotiating? What did they intend should happen to the agreement? These are matters I should like to hear the Attorney General explain before debate on this motion is concluded.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Trevor Sudama (*Oropouche*): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Tobago West can talk now, she was not there among the hostages in the Red House. I thought I should take this opportunity to ask a few questions of the Attorney General and the acting Prime Minister of the residue of the NAR Government.

I wish to express my condolences to the families of all those who perished in the event which took place on Friday, July 27 and thereafter, and to say how regretful and sad I am that our parliamentary colleague, Mr. DesVignes, the Member for Diego Martin Central, who sat just in front of me in the parliamentary Chamber and with whom I had, on many occasions, quite a lot of casual conversation, had to pass away in the circumstances in which he did. He was a humble man, loyal to his party and these days loyalty is at a premium. He was a man with whom you could have conversed easily. It is indeed very regretful that he and all those who died should have passed away under these circumstances. I extend my condolences to their families.

Mr. Speaker, I do not condone the actions of the Muslimeen on the evening of Friday, July 27 in storming the Parliament building and taking parliamentarians hostages. The manner in which they attempted that action is something I do not condone. I do not know what their ulterior motives were, but that will come out later on.

The Attorney General's statement seems to me to be quite emotive. I would not have spoken today except I felt that it was all designed to secure political advantage, although, during the course of his statement he talked about this not being a partisan issue. I agree it ought not to be a partisan issue, but the manner of his approach to this question which we face, perhaps the greatest national crisis in which this country has been embroiled, is something which was totally lacking in any kind of statesmanship.

11.40 a.m.

The first question I want to put to the Attorney General—since he based his speech on the report of the statement by the President in which the President merely stated three incidents: the taking of hostages at the Red House, the taking of hostages at the television station, and the attack on the police headquarters; three events which took place at about the same time, more or less simultaneously, at around 5.30 to 6.00 p.m. on Friday, July 27, 1990, and it is on the basis of these events that the President decided there was a state of public

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emergency—why was the state of public emergency not declared beforehand? Why wait until midday on Saturday, after all the arson and looting took place in Port-of-Spain? This Government and the President, whether he was acting on advice or whether he was acting on his own initiative, why was the state of emergency had to be declared at that particular point in time? Could the events in the interim period—some of the acts of destruction—have been avoided had a state of emergency been declared beforehand?

As I said, it is based on these three things—the attack on the police headquarters, the taking of hostages at the Red House and the taking of hostages at Trinidad and Tobago Television. Yet, it was the following day, after a night of terror with great chaos and confusion, that we had the acting President, either acting on his own initiative or acting on the advice and authority of the other members of Cabinet, declaring a state of emergency. Were the Government members and the President not aware of what was going on that Friday night?

We are told by the Attorney General that a military solution was in effect, either being proposed or already being agreed upon by the armed forces from Friday night. "We were in a position to go tactical from Friday night." What time Friday night? We were not told, but from Friday night the armed forces were in a position to go tactical. I want to know on whose authority. Did the armed services take it on their own initiative to put themselves in a position to go tactical? Were there other members of this Government who thought about other options? On whose authority were they acting? Were they acting on their own, or were they being advised by persons of this Government that a more acceptable solution to this problem was a military one?

Mr. Speaker, there is one question being asked on the outside by the population—what was the role and performance of the security services during this period of crisis? Was there any indiscipline or insubordination among sectors of the armed services or the police service? Those questions are being asked. Were the hostages in the Red House being threatened by those elements in the police or other security services who were not obeying instructions; who were not subject to order and command?

From what we went through as hostages in the Red House, I can say that it is a matter of great uncertainty as to what exactly was going on outside of Parliament with respect to negotiations for the release of the hostages. We do not know whether there was a manoeuvre taking place among the politicians, whether a manoeuvre was taking place among the armed services, but we are happy that in

the final analysis the armed services maintained their discipline and acted with the firmness with which they acted.

From our own point of view—and I am speaking as a hostage in that situation—many questions need to be answered. What is the responsibility of this Government for the national security of this nation, for the security of Members of Parliament and others? We recall that after the events of 1970 the Government specifically formed a Ministry of National Security presumably with the objective of dealing with events of a similar nature of that in 1970. What has happened over those 20 years? What really has happened? In fact, what has happened over the last three and a half years, that we could have had this enormous lapse of security that apparently the Ministry of National Security and the protective services were not aware that such an event which took place on July 27, 1990 was actually being planned?

There was rumour all over the place that if the Muslimeen had lost the case in which they were involved in the courts, there would have been some sort of reaction. Everybody seemed to have known except the Government and the police service of this country.

I am told—and it may be rumour; it may be true—that the Minister of National Security was advised some time ago that the Muslimeen were planning an insurrection. What did he do? What did the Prime Minister do? I am told that at 12.00 noon on the day in question, the Prime Minister himself was advised that certain actions were going to take place. If that was the case, then this whole situation was completely governed to the detriment of the welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The question really is: How do they govern? In whose interest do they govern? The ultimate problem is one of security, one of law and order, one of attempting to establish a normalcy of the situation in Trinidad.

The larger problem is a political one, and that is, how is it that large sectors of this population become alienated, that there is disaffection and conceived discontent to this population? What is clear is that we do not have an integrated society in which people are willing to adopt and accept the norms of the democratic process as it has been laid down and has been practised. The question we have to ask is: Why do large sectors of this population feel so alienated, that they feel that there is no recourse through the democratic process and, therefore,

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they have to use other means in order to try to effect change or in order to try to get their views heard and acted upon?

Unless we answer that larger question, then we will be continuing to focus on the question of security and law and order and those rules and regulations would become more stringent if we do not, at the same time, attempt to address the larger political question of having a participatory process in which the widest views are known and accepted and incorporate the most diffused elements in terms of participation in publicly changing their lives.

11.50 a.m.

From what I have heard here this morning, it does not appear that this Government acknowledges the larger political problem with which it is faced, or whether it has a plan of action and is willing to incorporate other sectors of the population in the political arena and in the rest of the society, in order to attain a national solution to the problem. That is so critical because except you say that the action of the Muslimeen was merely an act of a demented group of persons and that they were not symptomatic of grave disaffection in the society; and, therefore, what you are dealing with is the isolated problem of a group of people—we do not know what is their actual size—once you take that position you have dealt with the crisis which this country is facing.

If you take that position, I can only say that it is a myopic position with the Government doing something. If you take the wider view that it is a political problem that we have to solve then we have to devise in the long term a political solution, then you have to address certain questions. Does our political system as it is and the elements of our constitutional system permit this wider participation? What has to be done in an attempt to incorporate other people in the decision-making process and not merely having a situation where those who have been elected to power feel that theirs is the sole responsibility to impose their views on the public and to wait for five years to get a good response?

It is very clear that elements in this society are not prepared to wait five years if they seem to be under this pressure, under this continuing and intense impoverishment, in a situation of grave despair and utter hopelessness, hoping that the situation will change by the means and the methods employed by the Government. If significant segments of the population do not think so, my own view is that regardless of the kinds of security measures put in place, we are still

going to have protests and actions of the type which we experienced on July 27 and for the period continuing afterward.

It is not sufficient to talk about our hallowed traditions of our democratic process to which we have become committed. It is not sufficient to talk about that and to talk about those who want to violate it, because the violation has actually taken place. We must be aware of the reality. It is one thing to talk about what ought to be done and how we ought to behave; it is another thing to take stock of what is actually happening in the society and the country.

I say again that there are many people in this country who may not have agreed with the method employed by the Muslimeen and its leader in order to make their objectives and sentiments known to the population. There are large sections of this population who are not sympathetic to this Government and who felt that sooner or later someone had to tell them as it was in the most stark terms in which the reality of the economic situation in Trinidad and Tobago is being experienced. If you do not believe it, there is a lot of sympathy out there, not for the manner in which Abu Bakr attempted what he attempted, but the fact that there is an insensitive Government which had to be brought to its senses. An arrogance to which we have been subjected over the last three and a half years, and an arrogance based on this same concept of the democratic process where they have a majority in Parliament and, therefore, they can use that majority to impose their views willy nilly on the population and other Members of Parliament. If this situation has not taught this Government some humility, then I really do not know what else will teach it some humility.

We are all aware that it is a national crisis. We are all part of the crisis. I was immediately a part of the crisis and a national crisis requires national solutions. The rebuilding of Port-of-Spain must be undertaken but even if we rebuild Port-of-Spain, does it mean that we have really addressed the problem with which we have been faced? What about the rest of the society? What about the democratic process which, by adopting the Westminster system and the winner take all syndrome, that so long as you win a majority of seats in the Parliament, that gives you the right more or less, to rule as you see fit, ignore all other views and disregard all other options expressed.

Did the Attorney General feel: that the welfare of the hostages, the interest of the hostages, in any way matched the interest of the nation at large? Did the interest of the nation incorporate the welfare of the hostages? Was it felt that the hostages were expendable in the interest of preserving the nation? If the

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Government and those Members of the NAR who were on the outside felt that this was the case, then I would really like to know on what basis they came to those conclusions. Why is it when it was felt that perhaps minimal agreement was arrived at and we would have been released on the Sunday following Friday 27, these negotiations dragged on until Wednesday and we were kept in a state of complete uncertainty as to our fate when they were engaged in what they call strategic negotiations? They were getting the best advice from people who were experienced in hostage crisis, whose interests were being served. If, perchance, matters had got out of hand and the hostages in the Red House were killed, would that have served the interest of the nation?

12.00 p.m.

It might have served some particular interest, no doubt, because people do not actually realize what would have transpired had a military solution been agreed upon and the Red House and the other buildings had been stormed. What would have happened is that the hostages would have been killed, the Muslimeen would have been overpowered and killed eventually, scores of army and police personnel would have died in that endeavour and what would we have achieved as a result of this? *[Interruption]* That is why I am here? The delay was a result of the manipulation and the intrigue which was going on among the NAR members who were on the outside. That is what was going on. We were inside there and we knew the basis on which discussions were taking place, we knew the atmosphere in which those discussions were taking place. I read today in the newspaper where the Commander of the Defence Force talked about starvation being an option, not only an option for the Muslimeen but an option for all of us. They sat down in the luxury of the Hilton Hotel and talked about strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I have learned a lesson. The attitude of some members of the Government has been confirmed in my mind as to how they view the politics, how they view this society, how they view the expendability of others who may stand in their way of controlling political power. I say this not because I feel sorry for myself, because what I see is that whatever the nature of the crisis there is an attempt to try to seek political advantage out of it; personal and group political advantage of that situation. That is the conclusion I have come to after having spent those five days as a hostage in the Red House, after getting an idea of what possibly was transpiring on the outside with respect of the negotiations for our release.

We have been told that the captives in the Red House and elsewhere, but particularly the Red House, were not in a position to negotiate their own release. That may have been so, I would say perhaps they were not in a position to totally negotiate their own release because the critical factor was the defence force and the police service in the negotiations of our release. If that was the case, I would like to know how the people on the outside, who were reputedly conducting negotiations, viewed the authority of the Prime Minister and other Ministers who were there in the Red House. Did the fact that they were held captive denude them of their authority? Did it denude the Prime Minister of his authority as Prime Minister and the Attorney General and other Ministers of their respective authority as Ministers? If by virtue of the fact that they were held they were captive deprived of their authority, where did that authority rest? Because the Prime Minister was making telephone calls from the Red House and speaking to the Commander of the Defence Force and the President and other members of the NAR Cabinet. The Minister of National Security was also speaking from the Red House to other authorities on the outside. Were they speaking with the authority with which they were vested or were they denied of that authority? This is something I would like to know. Could they have had a hand in securing their own release?

I also want to make mention of my friend from Chaguanas who spent one night with us—I am sure it would be a very unforgettable night for him—and who left the Parliament Chamber of the Red House on Saturday morning, July 28 with the views of the people who were in there. If you want to embellish it you could call it terms of agreement, but at least he had our views to which he attested. He went outside and he attempted—I do not know what transpired outside when he spoke to his other Cabinet colleagues and what sort of negotiations were held—but unfortunately we heard nothing from him either by way of confirmation that negotiations were proceeding or what were the obstacles which may have been encountered. We heard nothing. In the absence of information, not only for those within the Chamber but for people outside, all sorts of speculations and rumours were circulating which could have caused enormous damage and could have precipitated action to have been taken which today would have been regretted by the population at large. Was the control over information by the Government and the type of control being exercised by keeping our population in the dark in the manner in which they did, the right approach to have taken in such a crisis? This is something that ought to be reflected upon.

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The Member for Chaguanas, as the Acting Prime Minister, finally made a statement on August 1 when we were released, that the surrender of the rebels or the Muslimeen, insurrectionists, whatever you want to call them, was unconditional. If it was unconditional then something would have transpired from the morning of Saturday, July 28 to the evening of Wednesday, August 1 to have made that situation unconditional. We do not know what transpired, we do not know whether the terms to which the rebels were agreeing were in fact accepted or whether they were being deceived. We do not know what was transpiring but we in the Red House were working on certain assumptions. I think perhaps somebody ought to be told what was going on. I do not know that even the Prime Minister in those circumstances was being informed, that there were obstacles and the nature of the obstacles to the negotiations of the release. Therefore, I am very skeptical as I stand here and look back on my experience of five days as a hostage; I am very skeptical of the intention of those on the outside who were negotiating the release of the hostages.

In whatever way I can assist in the task of reconstruction in the society, and it is a big task, I am willing and ready to be part and parcel of that great effort of fundamentally reconstructing the society. There are those who will only talk about reconstruction and only attempt to make political mileage out of our present situation, they will attempt to gloss over the basic problems of this society, they will continue to operate as if Friday, July 27 never happened, it was a temporary aberration from the normal way in which they will proceed to govern this society for the period for which they have this society under duress. Thank you very much.

12.10 p.m.

Mr. Kelvin Ramnath (*Couva South*): Mr. Speaker, I do not think I have the energy to engage in an address for very long. I am happy to be in these surroundings this morning. I do not know whether I would have ever been here had I not been a hostage. I did not know that these places existed before. However, I am also saddened at the fact that we have to meet here this morning instead of our usual place, to which myself and my colleagues have grown very accustomed.

I want to share with my colleagues our condolences and sympathies to all those who have suffered as a result of the recent crisis, particularly to the wife and family of the Member for Diego Martin Central, who must be undergoing very difficult times as a result of the untimely passing of Mr. Des Vignes.

This morning the Attorney General requested that the discussions on his motion to take note of the decision of the President, be above party politics and that we should at this time be concentrating on efforts to put the country together again. I want to tell him that there have always been people in this country, including myself, who are willing and have been willing to participate, and who have made, over a very long period of time, statements to the effect, of our willingness to contribute to the development of the country.

I want to tell him that they are not the only ones who have this nation at heart and they must not feel that any attack on the Government is an attempt to support any unconstitutional means of overthrowing the Government. The two are not the same. However, there might be people in the society who believe that if you condemn what has taken place, you must therefore support the Government. I do not believe that we should hide the facts from the population. I think that we have experienced a crisis in the society yet too much has been hidden from the population. I think the population is ready and willing to co-operate in the rebuilding and reconstruction exercise once they are told the truth and once they are given the opportunity to participate.

We cannot forever run the Government from the Hilton Hotel. In fact, we cannot forever run the country in a state of emergency, however important it might be to have a state of emergency in the present circumstances. I drove to Port-of-Spain this morning and I was in a very composed state of mind until I arrived at this building. It is interesting that it is only when I arrived in this building that I felt that this country was in a serious crisis, with all the army personnel and police personnel with guns all over the place. I am not against providing security. In fact, one member of the press asked me: "How is it that you are walking all alone from your car to this building?" I did not understand what he was saying until I got here. I am not too sure that the Attorney General and other Members, have exhibited magnanimity in their own actions when it came to dealing with Members of the Opposition. There has been no member—apart from the Member for St. Augustine—who left on the night of Wednesday last for his home who has been contacted by this Government. I do not know whether I really want to pursue the matter, but I want to tell him that when he speaks about rising above the party political level, he must ensure that his Government is in fact practising it. I drove my car from the Hilton Hotel, a car that was damaged by a bullet that went through the doorpost and smashed the glass of the left back door. I drove all alone from Hilton Hotel with my wife to Couva on Saturday. I have not been contacted by the police, by the Government

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or by a single person in authority, to enquire of my safety, my health and so forth. Today we are told directly and indirectly, certain things with respect to where our loyalty lies and so on.

I do not want him to send any policeman to guard my house. But I just want him to know that, it appears to me it was gallerying around the Hilton Hotel with all those personnel in the bush, and where the Member for Couva South and all the other Members were allowed to leave without any consultation and have not been communicated with up to today.

12.20 p.m.

I do not want these remarks to sound as self-serving, but I just want to let him know that he cannot on the one hand, for the benefit of the public, request that Members of the Opposition co-operate in these very difficult times, and then they do not matter. I do not think that our colleagues have been contacted. I will have much to say about my experiences as a hostage at the appropriate time, but I can tell you—particularly those who did not go through this experience—that they should be very careful that they do not try to behave as if they had gone through the experience. That is not to say that people outside did not go through a very difficult experience during the crisis.

Mr. Speaker, I want to raise a matter which has engaged your attention for a very long time, even while you were in the Opposition. It has to do with the provisions of adequate security in the Parliament building. I think in many ways we are lucky that a mad man did not enter the Parliament Chamber on July 27, 1990 with a machine gun and killed everybody, because that has always been a possibility. One man could have walked into that Chamber and killed everybody. Some of us were made to lie down in the building and we were tied up and so on, but the level of security is appalling when you consider the kind of security that obtains in the British and Canadian Parliaments and other so-called well established democracies. You do not enter the Canadian Parliament without a pass, and you do not enter the Chamber without being properly searched. But successive Governments have only been concerned about providing luxurious environment for Ministers, so Parliament is a Friday afternoon activity and it does not matter whether there are toilet facilities equivalent to what obtains in Woodford Square; it does not matter whether we have a tea room; it does not matter whether there is a proper library or whether parliamentarians who are not Ministers are provided with decent accommodation.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what is interesting? A few weeks ago I was stopped at Couva by an officer of the tactical squad—they were dressed in black outfits—and I was told: "Put on your wiper, your lights and blow your horn." When I enquired of him why he was doing that and why he was not looking for arms and ammunition, he became very hostile. They were patrolling Debe and Penal; they were everywhere except in the nation's Parliament. And that raised the question as to how serious the Commissioner of Police and the Minister of Justice and National Security really are. These people are about the seat of Parliament. I am not suggesting that these people who want to be violent and who want to impose their will on parliamentarians and the population will not do so in spite of heavy security, but that is no excuse for the lack of proper security arrangements in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

I think we are all very sorry to hear of the untimely passing of Superintendent George. When the history is written, George may very well have been a victim of carelessness on the part of his own colleagues, who sent him there as a symbol and left him to die because there is no security, even to dissuade people from thinking about doing what unfortunately happened in Parliament.

When Mr. Robinson writes his memoirs and when Mr. Richardson speaks—it is a great pity that they are not with us today—very different accounts of what transpired would be given to the public. That is why I want to warn hon. Members to be careful about what they say. They should keep their comments to their own roles, rather than try to speak on behalf of those who have completely different interests.

After the army and police had surrounded the Red House, I could not understand why anyone would authorize members of the security forces to impose violence against the occupants of the Red House. Maybe it was Col. Theodore's strategy or it was the strategy of some head of a ruling junta who was on the outside of Camp Ogden, I do not know. I can tell you that certain initiatives were taken by senior members of the Government press when they could not logically conclude why the security forces were shelling the Red House with the Prime Minister and various other Ministers and parliamentarians in the compound after the Red House had been sealed off by security forces.

Many of the calls which they prevented or tried to prevent from going out of the Red House were being made by people—not with guns pointing at their heads. I do not want it to be misunderstood that we were not under duress or we did not have guns at our heads, but certain initiatives were taken by occupants of

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the Red House, as a result of the constant shelling of the Red House up to Sunday. I saw bullets coming through the curtains. In fact, it was the first time I ever sought solace behind the Speaker's Chair. It is a formidable installation. You will be surprised to know how many people worshipped that Chair.

I must also say that I have confirmed the shelling of the Red House, particularly on Saturday night. Despite the presence of Canon Clarke, who had convinced the captors that the Government was talking and that an amnesty had been approved, certain elements within the Police Service, without authority, decided to shoot at the Red House because they had a personal score to settle.

Mr. Speaker, one of these days I shall tell you who told me that. He is incapable of lying and he was a part of that whole process of discussion. I know the difficulty a government will have in these times. This Government wants, as far as possible, to pretend that everything is fine, that the security forces are co-operating and collaborating to maintain peace and order, but that definitely did not manifest itself on Saturday night. The Prime Minister went on radio on several occasions, not asking to submit to the captors, but begging to stop the shooting at the Red House. They were shooting from all directions. Mr. Fernandes, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Justice and National Security went on the radio asking that the police allow the army to take control of the situation.

12.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, you will be surprised to know the kind of language in which the replies came to the Prime Minister. My colleagues will tell me that the Muslimeens were doing that. Everything was the Muslimeens—they were jamming the radio; they were shooting at themselves. The army and police were around the Red House, but the Muslimeen were able to go above the army and police on Duprey Building, the Hall of Justice, Fire Brigade Station and the CID Tower to shoot against themselves. We are expected to—because you see we have a hostage mentality—agree with them that all this was engineered by the captors so that we will believe that the army and police were co-operating with us in the Red House. These are some questions that must be answered. I was surprised that Mr. Robinson did not say more. I am sure that he will say more at the right time because I think that I understood what he went through those days in Parliament.

I can also tell you that his release was not accidental. They did not negotiate it. They are incapable of negotiating anything. It was because Mr. Robinson had no confidence in them, that he had to come out to take control of the situation. He had to come out to take control of the situation because he did not trust them. There was not a significant member of the ONR held hostage in that Parliament, and I say no more. How do you expect him to trust them? Then as Prime Minister he was asking not to give up to the captors but simply stop the shooting.

They will never understand the emotional and mental torture that people had to go through in that Chamber, particularly men with bullets in their legs who were expecting to die at any time, and not by the bullets of the captors but by the bullets which were coming from the outside. At no time, notwithstanding the atrocities committed at the initial stages, that anyone who was held there felt that he/she was going to be killed by the captors. The captors had achieved what they wanted. If anybody had any fear of being killed, it was as a result of what was happening on the outside. That is my experience. They could disagree with it; they could agree with it—that is a matter for them.

Starvation being an option was not only considered, it was practised by them because there were opportunities given to that Government to send a tin of crix biscuit and they refused. In fact, in one situation I am told by very reliable people—"Sandwiches for Dominic Kalipersad". If you give us Dominic Kalipersad we will send you sandwiches. In the case of the Red House it was not an option, it was actually practised.

Hon. Member: What is wrong with that?

Mr. Ramnath: I am asked what is wrong with that. Some people will have to experience what it is not to eat for six days particularly when you have people who have illnesses of various types. My friend from Port-of-Spain North asks what is wrong with that. *[Interruption]*.

Mr. Fox: He did not surrender.

Mr. Ramnath: He is selling them out. I am convinced that a serious option that they considered was the total alienation of all of us in the Red House and then give our wives medals claiming that their husbands died in the service of the nation while they organize a counter right wing coup. That is what the country has to be told, and I hope that the television today will broadcast a little more than the 30 seconds normally granted to Members of this Parliament.

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No one was thinking about the country while we were in there. What is surprising is that some people believe that the country would have been saved if the Prime Minister and the rest of us were destroyed.

I share the view of the Member for Oropouche. This boast of the Attorney General that at 8.30 p.m. when he was at the corner of Chacon and Abercromby Streets doing what I imagine everyone of us would be trying to do—get home—that the army had gone tactical; that already buses were being placed at intersections; that the army was ready to find a military solution; that is a very serious statement. Two buildings were occupied by the captors, 610 Radio was playing lovely music into the ear of the Attorney General and he was convinced that everything was normal outside of TTT and the Red House, and the army had gone tactical.

The army was ready to present a military solution which could mean what—trying to enter the Red House? Do they know how the Red House is constructed? No one would have ever lived to tell the story if they had dared enter the Red House. They do not understand that inside of the Red House were young men who, whatever we think of them, were motivated spiritually and otherwise to kill in defence of what they stood for. It was not just a group of people holding toy guns, it was a group of people who could argue with the Prime Minister—and who did—and indeed any other Minister about what they believed. They had a sense of belief, whether it was right or wrong. So you were dealing with men who were highly motivated and who knew in their minds that they were going into heaven without even having to go through the process of judgement.

I learnt a lot during that period there, and I hate the kind of sarcasm in the voice of the Attorney General when he talks about some people claiming that they were not badly treated. No one wanted to be there, least of all for that length of time. I was there because of them. We were dealing with people who were properly trained. These young men are not jokers, and their reply to that was a military solution. I can understand very well why they will consider such an option. They are not alone in the defence of Trinidad and Tobago—they have to take instructions from certain quarters higher up.

12.40 p.m.

I will leave much of what I have to say for the appropriate time. I do not wish to get sensational here this afternoon, but I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition that he must stop being such an opportunistic politician. We were

there listening to the radio—and I apologize if that word is a little harsh; we were listening to every broadcast that we possibly could have heard. You never experienced men trying to get on to the radio with their ears and whatever came on the radio was reported to us. To hear the Leader of the Opposition condemning any national government proposition—with guns in the Parliament surrounding the hostages—making these traditional speeches that they make in the UN, and already seeing himself as Prime Minister of the country once the solution has been made. *[Interruption]* My leader is not a reckless man. He knows when to talk and he knows what to say and when to say it.

I want to say that interfering with the communications in the Red House placed our lives in danger. Mr. John Humphrey personally allowed for the introduction of two telephones into the Chamber to prevent the Prime Minister being taken to the back by a Muslimeen member to go to the telephone. We helped to rip up some of the wires at the Red House to make the facility available. Their strategy was to disconnect the telephones. Every time they disconnected it, they claimed somebody was connecting it again. They were interfering with the telecommunication system; they were phone tappers. When you cut off communication, you were putting the lives of the people in there in danger because they were listening to the communication. They did not have to cut it off. They could have listened, but they made these men even more desperate when they had no communication outside the place of captivity.

The question we must ask is: Now that all this has happened, what will prevent other groups of people from expressing themselves by violent means in the society? We can condemn what has taken place; we can make all kinds of statements about the Constitution and the rule of law, that will not prevent a recurrence of what has happened. The fact that not only did the leadership attempt to take the Parliament, but 100 others—young people from all over the country—willingly joined in an exercise of violence to overthrow the Government. It was not only a group of psychopaths, as one would want to make them out. Why would such a large number of young men follow the leadership in such a way, to the extent that they were prepared to die for what they believed? We are not going to further the argument in favour of peace and democracy by simply condemning what has happened, but by evolving a programme for reconstruction.

The Government's programme is to get as much political mileage out of this, to claim how it has efficiently handled the release of the hostages. They were the least involved in our freedom. They had nothing to do with our freedom.

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Therefore, I want to urge them that if they want to genuinely rebuild this country, they must set the example of rising above the party politics. They must set the example of bringing into discussion and decision-making, people who can assist in rebuilding the country.

No amount of talk, the same old vacuous statement about foreign investment coming. This has nothing to do with it. One Minister talking about that could not have stopped the ships from coming into Trinidad, and there is a report that there is zero occupancy in the hotels in Tobago, they continue to just talk. The same old talk continues in this country. They know that what they are saying is not true, that we are in crisis and the whole nation must come together, but the nation will not come together under them. That is the mistake they are making, that by simply calling the nation together in this process of reconstruction, the nation will rally around that group that is left of the Government.

While I sympathize with all those who have been seriously affected, I will tell you I still cannot sleep. I still cannot get accustomed to sleeping on a height. Every time I get up, I feel I am on the floor. I still cannot get accustomed to lifting my head for fear that bullets will be coming through the window. It is a terrible experience and I can share the experiences of the families of those who have suffered as a result.

I therefore urge my colleagues who are present this afternoon that they should not try to seek political advantage in a very serious crisis, that when the time comes for politics after the state of emergency has been lifted and we are free to go outside and speak, we will make best use of that opportunity. At this stage they should practise what they are asking the population to do, that is, to exhibit restraint, magnanimity and co-operation.

Thank you very much.

The Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization (Dr. The Hon. Carson Charles): Mr Speaker, I will not take up too much time of the House. I will be brief. I am in support of my colleague in his comments. This is a very emotional moment for me right now even though I was not inside with the hostages and I was outside and with other colleagues. We had some role to play. One could argue whether it was a large or small role. That is a matter we can deal with in due course.

I will start by just making one small point of correction because things tend to get blown with the wind. I think the Member for Oropouche said that the Prime

Minister and other Ministers were informed before that such a thing might have happened. In fact, I think his information was that the Prime Minister at 12 o'clock may have had this information. I indicate that I returned from Tobago on Friday 27 at about 2.15 p.m. with the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Security after travelling to Tobago with them visiting the aftermath of the storm in Tobago. It may have been rather difficult for that particular communication to take place at that time. I urge that we be very careful when we get into suppositions because we do not have all the pieces of the story in as yet. If it is anything I want to make most important to this House this afternoon is that if we are all really committed to getting over this crisis in the best way, then let us get all the pieces of the story together so we fully understand what took place inside and outside.

12.50 p.m.

The National Alliance for Reconstruction, I assure you, Mr. Speaker, is at this time very restrained in terms of political activities and taking the opportunity for political action. I get the impression that other parties are prepared to do this and they are already doing it, that is to say, they are prepared also to co-operate by restraining themselves from political action and activity. If this is the case then the nation would perhaps have the best outcome. It is my view that the outcome we have had so far has really been the will of the Almighty because so many things could have gone wrong at so many points along the way. Mr. Speaker, you were there at the Camp and afterwards when we moved to set up a base of operation in the Hilton, who would have dreamt that we could have had so many options because so many things could have happened?

All kinds of questions have been raised about why the people were not freed after the Sunday. I just want to urge Members that there is much more information lacking in their own minds. What would have happened if the President had considered that he was in a position legally to appoint a new Prime Minister, which was one of the demands made: that a new Prime Minister be appointed and that appointment be conveyed to the people inside before one could proceed to the next step. Who could have imagined the next step then? After the Prime Minister's appointment was in force the entire Cabinet automatically resigns; there are all kinds of complications, there are so many matters missing.

When our colleagues were released we took the opportunity to spend many hours with them to get information from them on what they saw inside and we

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conveyed our own information on what was happening outside. That is not yet completed and I suspect it might be a very useful exercise for such a sharing of information to also take place with the Members of the Opposition who were inside, because in that way we would also know what was going on in their minds and they would know what was going on in our minds and then perhaps they would understand fully what took place.

Above all, it is my view that the greatest praise must go to the people of the country who did not take part in this event and all this talk about pressure that people were suffering and so on—we are fully aware that in many cases in many areas people are having a very hard time. We do our best to address this situation, but those people took no part in supporting the madness that was taking place on the 27th and in fact, this may above all else, have been the greatest factor on the side of the Government and the people of the country, on the side of sanity, that the people simply spurned it. So it had nothing to do with hardships people were facing, it had to do with actions of some who felt that power could be obtained by those means. The point made about the country not uniting under the National Alliance for Reconstruction and, therefore, some transfer of power is required is a point that might be noted.

It seems to me that if we are committed to contesting power on the basis of our Constitution we must also be committed to completely reject the actions that took place on July 27 and on the days following. For those who have experience in government, we have a little so far, three years, but those who are experienced in government perhaps may understand and appreciate the severity of the actions that took place and the delicacy of the situation now. It is a very delicate situation. I do not want to get into blame and so on, many have put blame on the doors of the National Alliance for Reconstruction already, even before the full postmortem takes place on the event. We can put blame in other quarters as well, but this is not the time for that. I merely want to say when we came here this morning it was under unusual circumstances. None of us are accustomed to being so heavily guarded. I normally drive around without a guard but I fully appreciate and am very happy now for the guarded escort that I and other Members of the Government have and which other Members who wish it will have. I think that is extremely important because that is the way we secure the democratic process at the time because those persons who have a role to play in our democratic process must themselves be protected.

We pray for the time when we can return to more normal conditions. No one knows what normal would be after this, when this is over and we move to another stage. What would be the level of security one has to use personally, as a Parliament and as a Cabinet, no one here knows what that means. The nation would not be the same again. In many respects the nation would have to change because of these events. I only hope that those who call upon the Government to learn its lesson would also take the opportunity to learn their lessons. There are lessons for all of us, not only for the National Alliance for Reconstruction. We are trying to learn our lesson and we have only put forward some small parts of the reconstruction process so far.

There is other work ongoing right now with respect to the social aspects. We are fully aware that there must not be any pool of people who can be manipulated and captured by self-seekers to be used for this kind of purpose and such a pool must not be allowed to grow, must not be there to be exposed for this kind of action. We are fully aware of this and we are working on this aspect of our programme to accelerate the things we started because one must respond to the crisis with greater vigour than that which one had taken before the crisis. We have not even assessed in detail the actual physical damage, far less the psychological damage and I assure hon. Members that the psychological damage has been done to the entire nation, but of course more directly to those persons who were hostages. I advise them that they may contact the Acting Minister of Health who we have mandated to ensure that a programme is put together for all persons who were hostages because we have the medical advice that it is important that such persons go through some period of assessment of themselves and take whatever treatment they find appropriate in the circumstances because it is a very harrowing experience and one can get confused.

I merely advise all Members, not only of Parliament, but all those others who were held at TTT and elsewhere, that the Minister of Health has been mandated to do this and I am sure he is willing and ready to have all those persons contact him and avail themselves of such services and he himself would also contact these persons in due course to have this done.

The psychological damage for the nation would require some healing and some study. I just repeat, that for all of us who have gone through this—whether we were inside and went through those unfortunate events on the inside or whether we were outside and learned a bit about what to do in such circumstances and played our part, whatever it may have been, there is no debate now about

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whether it was a big part or a small part—for us on the outside and for all those others who were refused from coming out to observe us because they could not get information, they could not participate, I am told that there are people who were anxious to be recruited to come and fight for their country. I made contact with a few individuals to find out what was happening and I was told that there were people who were really prepared. It is a demonstration of the people's love for democracy and the willingness to defend it. It is something to learn. But we have all learned our lessons for the time being.

I end by again fully supporting the Attorney General in his contribution earlier this morning in asking that we take our time to assess everything and learn the most we can from the circumstances. I fully believe that the National Alliance for Reconstruction will be able to come out of this with dignity, that we would be restrained politically during this period of crisis and I also believe that other political parties might also restrain themselves from political action and allow the nation to benefit and learn something and to come out whole again. I thank you very much.

1.00 p.m.

Mr. John Humphrey (*St. Augustine*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask that the Government live up to its responsibility under the Constitution and show accountability to the Parliament, and on the basis of what has been said so far, that Members of the Government brief fully, every single Member of this House on all the events as quickly as is humanly possible and exchange information between those who confronted the situation first-hand. I can assure you that those who did not, cannot possibly understand what the experience was like. That is all I ask for.

The Attorney General (Hon. Anthony Smart): Mr. Speaker, I want to give the Member for St. Augustine the assurance that this Government is prepared to give all the information that is available to those persons who were held hostage over the period of the five days, and also to the Parliament. It is prepared to give that information. There have been many misconceptions. As I said in my presentation, the hostages were not privy to all that was going on outside the Red House. They were fed information by their captors. They did not get that information from independent sources. They were fed wrong information in many cases.

I think it is well known, the love, regard and respect that I have for the hon. Prime Minister, Mr. A.N.R. Robinson. I will tell him that arrangements were made for his release on Tuesday morning at 8.00 o'clock, and at 7.58 a.m. those arrangements had to be cancelled for security reasons. Eventually at 1.20 p.m. he was released. I give that information so that the people will be aware that there were many things happening at various times during the course of the day. The persons in the Red House did not have information as to what was going on at TTT at one point. There was confusion on the radios. Some of the Police radios had fallen into the hands of the bandits, so that when people thought, for instance, that the police might have been saying things, it was not so. So that there was mass confusion. I think it is a credit to all of us that today most of us are safe. So I advise those persons who were held hostage, I assure them and I want to assure the Parliament that we will make all the information available.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition asked some questions and I believe I want to answer one or two. He asked whether the best advice that was available to us in hostage negotiations was given by a selective group. There has been thrown about, very unfortunately, a view that there was some right-wing—whether it is right-wing or left-wing or centre-wing, I do not know what wing I am in. I assure the Leader of the Opposition that I have never seen greater co-operation among those who were outside as I saw on Friday night/Saturday morning. The team work that I saw I have never seen it in my life.

Minister Myers does not come from the ONR. Minister Charles does not come from the ONR. The Speaker of the House is not a member of the ONR—has never been a member of the ONR. As a matter of fact, there is no ONR. We know that was dissolved in 1986. So let us get the record straight. There are some of us who were held hostage who are belabouring under misconceptions. The hon. Member for St. Joseph had indicated that Minister Pantin, acting Minister of Health, had made, and is making available, to all the hostages, such medical care as they need and that is necessary. There are some persons who have not submitted to medical care. I was there that night when the hostages were released and there were some who said they wanted to go home. We could not hold them against their will. We urged them. We had made arrangements for them, first of all, to go to Mt. Hope Hospital and they were not interested. Many of them wanted to go home. We could not force them to stay although we advised that we had psychiatric care available, and they should spend at least two or three days in the hospital.

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Eventually as a stop-gap measure we said, "okay, those of you who do not want to go to the hospital, who do not want to go home, come to the Hilton and stay as long as you want". This whole process of de-briefing, getting out of the post-hostage syndrome, I am advised by the medical experts, can take a long time. It can take a few days. In some cases it can take six months. I am also advised that during the course of the relationship between hostage and hostage-taker an empathy developed in some cases. In some cases stronger than others. So that you will appreciate some of the difficulties that some of the former hostages are now going through. It is not by any means an easy matter. I hope all the former hostages will appreciate, in due course, as some of them have already appreciated, that the interest of the nation on that night of July 27, 1990 and those five days following coincided with the interest of the hostages. It was not a question of the interest of the nation or the interest of the hostages. The safety of the hostages was paramount and we achieved our purpose. We achieved our objective.

I understand the inconvenience, the agony, the pain that the hostages suffered. I suffered it for two and a half hours. Many a time I thought I would die. It was a question of whether I would die within an hour or within eight hours, whether I would die at the hands of a captor's bullet, whether I would die as a result of an exchange of gunfire. I did not know. I did not, by any means, suffer as much as those who were there for five days, but I can tell you that I suffered tremendously.

1.10 p.m.

I want at this stage to say, thanks to the Lord first, and to the four women who assured my safety on that night. The story will be told in due course. It is not important now. I say thanks to those ladies and the officer of the Special Branch who further saw to my safety. The crisis is not yet over. We have to be careful about the things we say and the things we do, and we have to be grateful to everyone who has helped. It is unfortunate that there has been some talk about disaffection on the part of the police. I heard that a short while ago. I assure Members of Parliament and this nation that nothing is further from the truth. There has been complete co-operation from the police and everyone involved in these trying events.

Mr. Speaker, finally, to deal with another issue of public and political meetings raised by the Leader of the Opposition. The regulations as they stand at this time and as I understand them, do not prevent indoor meetings. If one wants

to hold public meetings, one needs to get the permission of the Commissioner of Police. That would clear up the situation. I wish to thank the Speaker, and hon. Members—as I said it is very unfortunate that we are called here today, but maybe it is a good thing. I look forward to the day, hopefully sooner than three months from today, when we can lift the state of emergency and get back to a period of normalcy.

STATE OF EMERGENCY (EXTENSION)

The Attorney General (Hon. Anthony Smart): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the motion standing in my name:

Whereas it is enacted by section 8(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago that the President may from time to time make a Proclamation declaring that a state of public emergency exists;

And Whereas the President has by Proclamation made on July 28, 1990, declared that a state of emergency exists in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago;

And Whereas it is enacted by section 9(2) of the Constitution that a Proclamation made by the President for the purposes of and in accordance with section 8 shall, unless previously revoked, remain in force for fifteen days;

And Whereas it is enacted by section 29(1) of the Constitution that before its expiration the Proclamation may be extended from time to time by resolution supported by a simple majority vote of the House of Representatives, so however that no extension exceeds three months and the extensions do not in the aggregate exceed six months;

And Whereas it is necessary and expedient that the Proclamation made by the President on July 28, 1990 declaring that a state of emergency exists in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, should be extended for a further period not exceeding three months;

Now, therefore be it resolved that the Proclamation made by the President on the July 28, 1990 declaring that a state of emergency exists in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago be extended for a further period of three months.

Question proposed.

Mr. Basdeo Panday (Couva North): Mr. Speaker, when I addressed this House previously I was so incensed and so disgusted by this Government that I

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omitted to join with my colleagues in extending my condolences to the family of those who have died and those who have suffered loss. I do so now.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this motion is to extend the period of emergency to three months. If you look at the law you will see the maximum which the Government can ask is three months. On this occasion it is asking for the maximum. We have not heard a single word from the Attorney General as to why the maximum. They could have come here and asked for the state of emergency to be extended for a month.

Mr. Speaker: The Minister did say that he hopes it could be lifted before the three months.

Mr. Panday: Well, I do not think that is the way it should be approached. It could be extended, if so needed—that was the other argument [*Interruption*] This House could be summoned. I do not know that this House is in recess. The fact that this House is going into recess is only a matter that supersedes the welfare of our nation. There is no way that we are agreeing that this state of emergency be extended to three months by a Government that has betrayed this country. The greatest act of betrayal, and they sit there asking for Parliament to extend the powers given to a bunch of people who have betrayed this nation. They are a bunch of people who are arrogant and contemptuous of other people in this country. I thought that they would have learnt a lesson, but they have not learnt a lesson.

The Minister has the temerity to say that he hopes we will stop the politics. We must stop the politics while they continue on the radio and on the television. I hope we do not have to continue to hold meetings under these circumstances, because if we do, then I cannot see the usefulness of participating.

1.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, when I speak here on these conditions, you do not listen to me. They do not listen to me. I am denied the right of equality of treatment on the television.

Mr. Speaker: It is very unfair for the hon. Member to accuse the Speaker of not listening to him.

Mr. Panday: What I am trying to say, Mr. Speaker, is you are not supposed to take me on as they take me on. They do not take me on. They do not respond. There is no audience here. That is the way we go. I am discriminated against on

the television which they control. They control the *Guardian*. That is the daily rag now of the NAR, so it will serve no purpose for me to come back here to holding meetings under conditions like this. I just wanted to make that clear, that I am hoping we will be able to move out of these premises or that some arrangements will be made for the public to be here because that is the only purpose of making a contribution under these circumstances.

I believe that while I am on that subject, it may be an opportune time too for us to revise the Standing Orders where members of the public have a right to be here and they are not here at the mercy and grace of anyone, because that is part of the democracy as we have developed it. The Government ought to be by the people, for the people and with the people.

Let me tell this House and this country, therefore, what are the powers that this Government is asking for, for a period of three months. It says here:

"For the purposes of these Regulations a person shall be regarded as the holder of a public meeting or the organizer or leader of a public march if in any way—

- (a) he holds or calls together or assists in the holding of or calling together or speaks at a public meeting;
- (b) he organizes, leads or conducts or assists in the organization, leading or conduct of a public march."

A public march is underhand unless one gets permission.

"(4) . . . the President may make Orders for the purpose of dealing with the circumstances of any situation . . ."

These include.

- "(a) censorship and the control and suppression of publications, writings, maps, plans, photographs, communications and means of communication;"

I have already heard the Minister asking the press for constraint. I do not know if constraint means not publishing the truth because if we are going to reconstruct this nation, there is one thing we cannot do—we cannot reconstruct it on an issue of lies. That is what we cannot do. It is going to be extremely important, whether there is a state of emergency or not, that there be no censorship of the press in the publication of truth.

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"(b) prohibiting or restricting the possession or use by any person or body of persons of any specified articles."

Fair enough.

- "(c) control of the harbours, ports and territorial waters of Trinidad and Tobago, and the movements of vessels;
- (d) the transportation by land, air or water and the control of the transport of persons and things;
- (e) trading, exportation, importation, production and manufacture;
- (g) authorizing the search of persons and premises and the seizure of anything and its detention for so long as may be necessary for the purposes of any examination, investigation, trial or inquiry;
- (h) empowering such authorities or persons as may be specified in the Orders to make orders and rules and to make or issue notices, licences, permits, certificates or other documents for the purposes of the Orders;
- (j) . . . taking of possession or control and the use of, or on behalf of the Government of any property or undertaking . . ."

These regulations will include:

"4. (1) Until Orders made by the President under regulations otherwise provide, the Commissioner of Police is hereby authorized to exercise the following powers:

- (a) to prohibit or restrict the possession or use by any person or body of persons of any specified articles;
- (b) to impose on any person any restrictions in respect of his employment or business, in respect of his place of residence . . ."

If you are under house arrest.

". . . and in respect of his association and communication with other persons;"

While I am on that, I saw in today's newspapers that people who had belonged to the Jamaat al Muslimeen who are public servants are asked not to report to work. I think I ought to take this opportunity to tell the Government and to warn the country that this incident should not be used as an excuse or an opportunity to

denigrate Islam, or to discriminate or abuse the rights of Muslims, whether they belong to the Jamaat al Muslimeen or not. If they have done wrong, let them be arrested, but let them not be victimized.

Therefore, without these regulations being passed here today, one sees the beginning of victimization against people because they are Muslims. I have been reading in the press—I can only hope it is not true—that people's homes are being raided because they are Muslims. I am being asked to give this Government this power for three months, a government that betrayed the people of this country. What is happening today is what they have inflicted upon this nation. We had a united nation in 1986. By 1988, they destroyed it. They were the ones who laid the foundation for what is happening here today and we must give them this kind of power for three months. If they are genuine about reconstruction, why do they not ask for one month? I am prepared to support this motion if it is for one month. In fact, I propose to move an amendment to this motion, that this period of emergency be extended for a further period of one month.

If after one month this Government is of the view that it needs more time, then let us come back to the Parliament and let them explain.

The Attorney General has not told this House why they need three months and why not two months, or one month. In those three months, we know what they will do. In their midst are those who tried to introduce the Public Order Act so they will have the right—

- "(c) to prohibit any person from being out of doors between such hours as may be specified, except under the authority of a written permit granted by such authority or person as may be specified;
- (d) to require any person to notify his movements in such manner, at such times, and to such authority or person as may be specified;
- (e) to prohibit any person from travelling except in accordance with permission given to him by such authority or person as may be specified;
- (f) to require any person to quit any place or area or not to visit any place or area."

You will note, Mr. Speaker, that when there was this attack upon the Parliament, I think it was a day after the attack that the President declared the state of emergency and when the President declared the state of emergency, one

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expected that it would be used in order to prevent looting, and used in order to secure the release of the hostages.

1.30 p.m.

Today there is no looting, the looting has subsided, the hostages are released. We read in the press that there are certain incidents taking place and it is obvious that there would be need for mopping up operations. We accept that, but they have not told us why their mopping up operations will last three months. How do we know that the mopping up operations will not be for a month and they will use the state of emergency to victimize their political opponents? I have no doubt in my mind that this Government is going to use this situation to create a police state in this country. That has been the tendency to which they have been moving ever since they split the country and realized they could not hold it by popular power that they have to hold it by force. They propose to use this as an excuse to do that but they will do it over our dead bodies.

We give no undertaking to cease our political activity, in fact, we shall intensify our political activity to ensure that the nation is kept abreast of what this prejudiced Government is doing; this Government of betrayal; this Government to which we handed unity and which destroyed it. This is the Government that asks us— *[Interruption]* That is all they are concerned about, law and order, bringing a Public Order Act. Mr. Speaker, they may be the legitimate Government but they are an immoral Government. In 1986 nobody voted that Government into office, so when they keep talking about democracy and the rape of democracy, they began the process when they raped democracy in this country.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I was elected by the people of my constituency and became an elected representative. The hon. Member is therefore misleading the House. He must withdraw that statement.

Mr. Panday: Mr. Speaker, it is not my fault if the hon. Minister does not understand what I have said. What we said is that in 1986 the people of this country elected a certain Government; they cannot deny that; they cannot deny also that they destroyed that. I am being asked today to extend the powers of people who use, abuse and discard; I am being asked to give this kind of limitless power for three months when they have not justified why they should have it. They must justify why they want this power. There are no hostages being held, the looting has ceased, the mopping up operations, in our view, ought to take a

month and there is no reason why they should come to this House and ask for three months.

Among the powers they shall have is not only the power to put people under house arrest and so on, but as you know when a state of emergency exists persons are not even-

"...liable to suit or action in respect of any acts done under lawful direction or authority pursuant to the provisions of these Regulations."

It says also—

"Except with the prior permission in writing of the Commissioner of Police, the grant of which shall be in his discretion, no person shall hold or take part in any public march or in any public meeting."

Will they be the only ones to inform the public? Who will inform the public of what is happening? I cannot trust them to be fair, they manipulate the television and exclude views from the television, they will have control over that. They will carry out the politics but we must not engage on political activity.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move an amendment to the last line of this motion substituting for the word "three" the word "one" so that it would read:

"Now Therefore be it Resolved that the Proclamation by the President on July, 28 1990, declaring that a state of emergency exists in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago be extended for a further period of one month."

We must not get this country accustomed to living under a state of emergency where the police has the power to curtail the power of speech. *[Interruption]* Three months is the maximum they can get it for, they can extend it again after three months. I want to tell them that the world is concerned about what is taking place in this country. A letter has been sent to the Prime Minister, Mr. A.N.R. Robinson, dated August 6, 1990 from the Lawyers Convention on Human Rights who are concerned *[Laughter]* For them human rights has always been a laughing matter. It took a Minister to be held hostage to realize that certain people are being alienated in the society. We thought they would have learned but today they laugh when you speak of human rights. We must never fall into the trap of allowing situations that develop in the society to be used as an excuse for destroying the very democracy for which we have given our lives. Our colleague, Mr. DesVignes, would have died in vain if they destroy the democracy for which

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we are all fighting. All they are concerned about is how to restrain people's rights; we must stop the politics, not them. This letter dated August 6 reads:

"After examining the events of the last few days we know that it is a difficult time for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is during precisely such moments that it is crucial to uphold the rule of law and observe fundamental liberties."

That is the point I wish to make—

"Regardless of the violence and crimes committed by those behind the coup attempt your Government must ensure that the rights guaranteed to all persons under Trinidadian law and under international law, particularly the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights which Trinidad and Tobago acceded to in 1978, are upheld.

I would like to point out that article 4 of this Covenant prohibits derogation from certain fundamental rights even in a state of emergency. These include the right to life, to be free from torture and slavery, freedom of conscience and religion."

It is upon that basis I made the statement that this incident must not be used to attack or denigrate Islam or attack people who adhere to the Muslim religion.

"Finally, I have recently learnt of the death of Mr. Omawale. As a humanitarian gesture I respectfully urge that you allow his mother and grandmother, currently in protective custody, to pay their final respects at the young man's funeral which I believe is scheduled for tomorrow.

I wish you and your country a speedy recovery from the trauma of the past week allowing the judicial system to operate freely and effectively, guaranteeing due process for a fair hearing for all those charged, of upholding the fundamental human rights of all citizens while helping in the healing process."

There is also a letter from the Congress of the United States House of Representatives. The letter I have just read came from the Deputy Director William G. O'Neil and the letter from the United States Congress is from Mr. Mervyn Dymally who expresses similar concerns. There has been a statement from a group of concerned Caribbean citizens which was issued on August 1, 1990, also expressing the same fears.

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I am also concerned about that, just as the Prime Minister was concerned about it in 1974 when he spoke to his party about what causes coups. If I may read from the *Express* of Wednesday, August 1, 1990, he is speaking to his DAC Congress and he said:

"Either they call elections based upon acceptable reform in the electoral system or they propel the country along the path of most Third World countries, that is, to the military coup. There are only two options left."

I am quoting from the person who is the Prime Minister today—

"There are some who say that in Trinidad and Tobago, a military take-over is impossible.

It is impossible just as it was impossible to scrap the Wooding Commission Report and repudiate the Wooding Commission; just as it was impossible to attempt to ram a PNM Constitution down the throats of the population; just as it was impossible to commit this country to the most far-reaching decisions on the basis of a 28 per cent one-party Parliament; just as it was impossible to intervene in the domestic affairs of Trinidad and Tobago; just as it was impossible to suspend local government elections scheduled by law to be held by 1st November, 1974 . . .".

1.40 p.m.

I just thought that at least some statement could be made about that, what you too will be doing in the local government elections which is an important part of our democracy. Those who talk about democracy must not do so glibly. You must also respect the institutions that support democracy.

Continuing with his famous speech to his party congress A.N.R. Robinson, now Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago said:

"All these things would be impossible only if those in power are prepared to recognize the basic premises of a democratic state. If these premises are not recognized, then no democracy is possible."

He has indicated that they do not intend to recognize democratic principle. We are not talking about constitutional war; we are talking about democratic principles, that is the choice and wishes of people which they discard and abuse at their will.

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The Prime Minister went on to say:

"I say as a political scientist and as a practitioner in the field of politics for 18 years that Trinidad and Tobago is heading straight towards a *coup d'etat* and we ignore the warning signals at our peril. It is not I who am inviting the *coup d'etat*. It is they who are playing the fool in Parliament and making a mockery of democratic institutions. They are the ones who are inviting the *coup d'etat*."

I ask, Mr. Speaker, having regard to their actions in their term of office, who invited this one?

"In Third World countries there are only two mechanisms of political change. Acceptable elections and *coup d'etat*. If you monkey about with elections then you not only invite the *coup d'etat*, you make the *coup d'etat* inevitable."

How prophetic.

"No Government can possibly govern forever. It is they who ignore the demands of the people and reject the unanimous recommendations of the Wooding Commission on the conduct of elections that are forcing the *coup d'etat* upon the country. It is they who say the name of the game is power."

Mr. Speaker, I repeat that.

"It is they who say the name of the game is power."

I repeat the Prime Minister's statement:

"They are the ones who are inviting the *coup d'etat*."

I repeat the words of the Prime Minister:

"It is they who say that in politics anything goes."

That is to ride people's backs and discard them. You could use them, abuse them and discard them. Anything goes. They are the ones who said that. The Prime Minister was very prophetic. Little did they know that they would one day do the very things for which they were condemning the PNM.

"It is they who say that the name of the game is power, those are the ones who are inviting the *coup d'etat*. It is they who say that in politics

anything goes, who are inviting the *coup d'etat*. It is the political prostitutes who pervert our laws and institutions, who proclaim that politics has no moral laws, to whom corruption has become a sordid way of life, those are the criminals that are inviting the *coup d'etat*."

I repeat those words and I emphasize them and I draw the country's attention to the relevance of them; to this bunch of people who sit in power over us, to use, abuse and discard. No morals or authority; no moral compunction. None at all. Did you think God was sleeping? When you humiliated and degraded us and marginalized us, do you think God was sleeping? I continue to read: *[Interruption]* It is the stench which is emanating from the statesroom of that ship, that is why I suffer nausea, Mr. Speaker.

"If the regime by its egotistical, insane and foolhardy conduct is making the military coup inevitable in Trinidad and Tobago, what measures must we in the DAC take, what measures must the population at large take for our self-protection?"

It is upon this basis, Mr. Speaker, that I argue the motion before you. What measures must we take to guard ourselves against them? The only measure we must take is to ensure that we do not put this kind of arbitrary power into their hands for too long. That is what we must ensure. I will never support this motion to extend the emergency for three months. As I said, I am prepared to support extension for one month and to come back here if needs be, to vote again.

Have they stated to us and to this House and to this population one single reason why they need three months? But you see, this is the kind of democracy they understand, that all they have to do is to get a majority and they ride roughshod over everybody else. Use and abuse and discard. All they need to have is a majority. So they have a majority and they want three months. We refuse to give them three months.

Unless I can be told why this Government wants the emergency for three months, I beg to so move that the motion be amended to read as I have indicated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Amendment seconded by Mr. K. Ramnath.]

The Attorney General (Hon. Anthony Smart): Mr. Speaker, what can I say? What I must do is note the extreme bitterness and anger of the Member for Couva North.

Mr. Panday: Do you expect me to kiss you for what you have done to this country?

Mr. Smart: Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that the crisis is not over. This is our country, our twin-island state. We have to ensure that the lives of the people in this country are secure. We have to ensure that the lives of these parliamentarians, including the Member for Couva North are secure.

Mr. Panday: Do not worry about me. You humiliated and rejected me.

Mr. Smart: Mr. Speaker, I again give the undertaking that if we are able to bring this situation under control within a week, we shall revoke the state of emergency. If we can bring it under control within a month, we shall do so. We want to see this country return to normalcy. We want to see business activity continue. We want to see our hotels full. We want to see the international reputation of this country repaired and the quicker we bring our country back to normalcy, the better for all of us. So I think the Members of this House, you, Mr. Speaker, and the population at large, understand and will support this resolution to continue the state of emergency for the period of three months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The amendment to the motion before the House has been duly seconded and the procedure is as follows: There will be three separate questions for the House. The first is that the word "three" be left out of the motion. If that is carried the second question would be that the word "one" be inserted in place of the word "three." After the amendment as proposed is disposed of, the original motion will be put to the House.

Standing Order No. 32 states:

"(3) An amendment to a motion may be moved and seconded at any time after the question upon the motion has been proposed by the Speaker or Chairman, and before it has been put by the Speaker or Chairman at the conclusion of the debate upon the motion when all amendments have been disposed of the Speaker shall then put the

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question on the original Motion or the Motion as amended as the case may require."

I shall deal with the amendment as proposed by the hon. Member for Couva North before we move to the original motion before the House.

Standing Order. No. 32(4) (c) deals with the procedure for the amendment. It states:

"Upon any amendments to leave out words and insert or add other words instead..."

The hon. Member is asking that the word "three" be removed and replaced with the word "one."

"a question shall first be proposed 'That the words proposed to be left out be left out, of the question', and only if that question is agreed to, shall the question then be proposed 'That those words be there inserted' (or 'added')."

Hon. Members in the resolution the amendment is that the word "three" occurring in the last line be left out of the question.

Question put.

The House divided Ayes 5 Noes 18

AYES

Panday, B.

Humphrey, J.

Ramnath, K.

Sudama, T.

Palackdharrysingh, R.

NOES

Tewarie, Hon. Dr. B.

Dookeran, Hon. W.

Smart, Hon. A.

Hosein, Hon. Dr. E.

Myers, Hon. L.

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Richards, Hon. Dr. A.

Charles, Hon. Dr. C.

Nicholson, Hon. P.

Samaroo, Hon. Dr. B.

Butcher, K.

Hem Lee, O.

Hector, Mrs. M.

Fox, J.

Guerra, T.

Sanderson, A.

Marshall, M.

Manning, P.

Question negatived.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the original amendment as proposed is deleted, therefore, the second question does not arise. Shall I put the original motion before the House?

Question put.

The House divided Ayes 18 Noes 5

AYES

Tewarie, Hon. Dr. B.

Dookeran, Hon. W.

Smart, Hon. A.

Hosein, Hon. Dr. E.

Myers, Hon. L.

Richards, Hon. Dr. A.

Charles, Hon. Dr. C.

Nicholson, Hon. P.

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Samaroo, Hon. Dr. B.

Butcher, K.

Hem Lee, O.

Hector, Mrs. M.

Fox, J.

Guerra, T.

Sanderson, A.

Marshall, M.

Manning, P.

NOES

Panday, B.

Humphrey, J.

Ramnath, K.

Sudama, T.

Palackdharrysingh, R.

Question on original motion agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Proclamation made by the President on July 28, 1990 declaring that a state of emergency exists in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago be extended for a further period of three months.

Motion made and question proposed, That the House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed by the Speaker. [Hon. B. Tewarie]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I omitted to indicate to the Acting Clerk of the House that he should send a letter of condolence on our behalf to the bereaved family to the late Member for Diego Martin Central.

I thank the Governor and management of the Central Bank for allowing us the use of these facilities. I also direct the Acting Clerk of the House to send a letter of appreciation and thanks on behalf of all hon. Members.

Business of the House
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There are two matters on which I should like to seek the assistance of the media—I do not normally do this. The first has to do with the committee that has been set up to recommend to the House ways and means of honouring the late Member for Diego Martin Central.

The first sitting will be held on Monday, August, 13, 1990, at the Red House. I am asking for assistance in these matters. We are inviting suggestions from the public—individuals and organizations. Suggestions can be addressed to the Acting Clerk of the House, Red House, Port-of-Spain, for Members of the committee to consider. We should prefer such suggestions come to us within 15 days from today's date since it is not our intention to allow this committee to continue for a very long time.

The second item is, as you will appreciate hon. Members, my primary responsibility is to assist and spearhead the re-establishment of the facility at the Red House for parliamentary activities to resume at that venue. In that regard, I should like at this stage to invite individuals and organizations in the private sector to contact us at the Red House with a view to our seeking their assistance to determine how we can, in the shortest possible time, restore and refurbish our facilities at the Red House, which is the seat of Government. I am appealing to the private sector to contact us with a view to giving us some measure of assistance.

I know that there are several ministries concerned which will be coming forward as well to assist us as far as possible. *[Interruption]* These are the points—on the one hand we say that we want to involve the public, but on the other hand when I appeal to the public to come forward we are being asked whether there is no Government anymore. I am merely acting as Speaker of the House of Representatives and it is my responsibility to look after facilities.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 2.00 p.m.