

Leave of Absence

Friday, February 15, 1991

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 15, 1991

The House met at 1.40 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The following Members have been excused from today's sitting: The Member for Nariva (Hon. Brinsley Samaroo) and the Member for Diego Martin East (Hon. Anthony Smart)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Govindra Roopnarine (Siparia):

**Telephone Services
(Extension)**

- 13.** Would the hon. Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities state whether an extension of telephone services will be made available to the residents of Penal Rock Road between the 3 3/4 mile and 8 mile mark in 1991?

**Roads
(Re-sheeting)**

- 14.** Would the hon. Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization state whether re-sheeting of the following roads will be undertaken in 1991—
- (a) That portion of roadway between Mohess Road and Penal Junction along the Siparia/San Fernando/Erin Road?
 - (b) San Francique Road?
 - (c) Penal Rock Road?
 - (d) Clarke Road?
 - (e) Rochard Road?

**Coromat River
(Dredging)**

15. Would the hon. Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization state whether dredging of the Coromat River will continue in 1991?

The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): Mr. Deputy Speaker, we ask for a deferral. On the last occasion the Members for Siparia and St. Joseph were not here.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

PUBLIC SECTOR PAY ISSUES

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Selby Wilson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, today I wish to provide for Members of this honourable House, and for the population at large, a perspective on the demands being made by the unions, and the implications for the national economic and financial situation.

Over the past few weeks, demands have been made, and in one case industrial action has been initiated by the various associations representing public sector workers, and by a union representing cane farmers.

These demands are not new, and were, in fact, made before the 1991 budget presentation. These same demands were discussed at length in numerous meetings between the unions and the Government. In the preparation of the 1991 budget, I consulted directly with these organizations and took their demands into account. In fact, the proposal put forward by the unions would have required \$650 million. Our projected resources could have accommodated \$250 million, and even then, at the cost of reduced allocations in some sectors. Yet, in the interest of the national economic recovery effort, and to show good faith, we increased the allocation by \$90 million, making a total of \$340 million available for the partial settling of the state's obligations to public sector employees of Caroni (1975) Limited.

Now, these demands, which neither the Government nor the country can afford, have again surfaced in a manner, and at a time, which would seriously impede the national economic recovery effort. Additionally, the industrial action already undertaken by two of these groups can have serious, almost disastrous, consequences on both the present stability, and the future prospects of Trinidad and Tobago. The action taken by the National Farmers and Workers Union has already begun to degenerate into intimidation and violence. If it continues it will

affect the success of the 1991 crop, and the earnings of the cane farmers themselves. Furthermore, if as a result of the dislocation in the industry, Caroni (1975) Limited is unable to satisfy its international quotas it runs the risk of having these quotas reduced in future years. This can have negative consequences for the viability of the company, as both its revenue and foreign exchange earnings can be seriously jeopardized.

The action taken by the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association (TTUTA), by its very nature, is calculated to disrupt the education of our children. Given the need to inculcate in our children certain desirable values and qualities, like respect and discipline, there is no question that the action by TTUTA will have consequences beyond the mere disruption of school. They are the professionals and know that better than I do. Yet they persist, and their demands continue, as if our discussions before the budget never took place.

In fact, just before the budget presentation, I had been persuaded by the unions that we should have one final meeting with all the organizations. Again, as proof of our good faith, I agreed. We spent more than an hour waiting for one of the representatives to turn up. After waiting for that representative, we called and were given assurances that he was on his way. He never showed up at the meeting. Significantly, that representative is the President of TTUTA.

1.50 p.m.

The past few weeks has seen the escalation of the demands and an increasing unreasonableness accompanied by threats of widespread industrial action on the part of the unions. Let me place on record some of these demands.

The Public Services Association has demanded the immediate implementation of the following:

- (1) The award of the Special Tribunal made in respect of certain monthly paid officers; and
- (2) The provisions outlined in the 1991 budget statement in respect of the reinstatement of the 10 per cent in salaries and the provision of COLA for 1989.

TTUTA demands that "acceptable proposals" be made on the following matters:

- (1) Implementation of the award of the Special Tribunal;

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- (2) Re-introduction of a system of merit increases; and
- (3) Payment of arrears arising from the non-implementation of the Special Tribunal award, the suspension of merit increases from 1987, and payment of the 10 per cent reduction in salaries for 1989 and 1990.

The sums that would be required to meet the costs of all these demands for public servants alone would amount to \$2 billion. Moreover, the cost of retroactively restoring annual increments with effect from February 1987 would be about \$100 million just for 1987. This increases by about \$100 million each year, so that in 1988 it would be \$200 million, and by 1990 would reach the staggering sum of \$400 million. This is an additional \$1 billion for the period 1987—1990. In order to pay these debts now, we need \$3 billion. This is almost 50 per cent of our estimated revenues for 1991. Our current wages and salaries costs would jump from approximately \$2 billion to \$3 billion, or approximately half of our projected expenditure for 1991, all this against a background of falling oil prices and increasing international instability.

I stressed at the meetings held with the unions before the budget, I stressed in the budget presentation, and I stress again to this honourable House our position on this matter. Let me quote from the 1991 budget speech:

"Mr. Speaker, we understand the position of the unions and their membership but we regret that the Government does not have the wherewithal to restore the emoluments which we acknowledge as their rightful claim at this time. The money is just not available."

This unfortunately continues to be the situation, and the unions concerned are well aware of it, yet the demands continue and become increasingly hostile, increasingly obdurate and increasingly unreasonable.

In a letter dated January 22, 1991 from the Joint Trade Union Movement, the Government was given an ultimatum. We were given the deadline date of Friday, February 15 by which to make a favourable and reasonable response to demands for meeting all the obligations to the public sector employees. The letter warns that the JTUM will not entertain any flimsy excuse of inability to pay. The letter threatens that the Joint Trade Union Movement has been mandated to "commence mobilization for a sustained struggle leading up to Resistance II."

The Joint Trade Union Movement's letter and the PSA, both demand immediate payment in cash of all arrears and increases. I am placing both that letter

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and my reply on the record. Let me read my reply. It is directed to Mr. Albert Aberdeen who had signed the letter from the Joint Trade Union Movement and who is the convenor of the Joint Trade Union Movement. My reply reads as follows. "

"Dear Mr. Aberdeen,

Re: Public Sector Pay Issues.

Please refer to your letter of January 22, 1991 wherein you called upon Government to give a favourable and reasonable response to five issues.

You will recall that in December 1990, meetings were held between the representatives of the public sector employees and a ministerial team at which these issues were fully discussed.

At those meetings, I pointed out that given the country's financial position, it is not possible to meet your demands for the public employees, including Caroni workers. However, consequent upon those discussions, Government decided to restore the 10 per cent of salaries with effect from the 1st of January, 1991 at a cost of \$300 million, and also to settle the arrears of COLA for the year 1989 at a cost of \$30 million. In addition, we paid \$10 million on account of arrears due to the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited.

On the matter of arrears, I indicated that a plan was being developed for the establishment of a State Unit Trust as a mechanism for satisfying the debt obligation to public employees and sugar workers. I informed participants that a white paper would be prepared on the subject, and that it would be submitted for general comment. I also gave the undertaking that full discussions would be held with the representatives of the employees affected before the legislation was introduced in Parliament. It is expected that this white paper would be ready for publication by the end of April 1991.

It will be appreciated that the national interest would always be better served by co-operation and collaboration among all constituent groups, and it is in this spirit of co-operation and collaboration that we look forward to specific proposals from the Joint Negotiating Team and other unions representing public sector employees.

Yours faithfully,

Selby Wilson,
Minister of Finance."

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This is the situation up to this point. Our already fragile oil-based economy is once more being threatened, this time from within by organizations whose members have the most to lose if our efforts at economic recovery are impeded. The war in the Gulf has shown very clearly how vulnerable we are as a nation to the vagaries of the international economic scenario. In spite of the war, the price of oil has fallen. Today, Mr. Speaker, the price of Brent crude fell to \$16 per barrel, which is \$6 below the average price budgeted in the 1991 budget.

We are still far away from the fully diversified economy that is our ultimate goal. If the present efforts of the unions to frustrate our economic mobilization and recovery are allowed to continue, the nation is in for a very rough time indeed. Our management of the economy has given us international credibility. This credibility is also part of the recovery effort as it helps to attract investment to our shores. Nothing will erode that credibility as much as an unreasonable, recalcitrant attitude that is prepared to sacrifice the goose without even the possibility of a golden egg.

We have ensured over the years that the lowest paid workers have been given preferential treatment in terms of cost of living allowances. In January 1987, partial restoration of COLA was given to some 14,900 workers whose salaries ranged from \$1,460 to \$2,000 per month. Persons earning up to \$1,500 per month had the COLA at \$280.80 fully restored. We have ensured that the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited have continued to be paid financing deficits of approximately \$100 million annually. We have provided income tax relief, benefits and incentives for savings which have allowed greater disposable household incomes and better prospects for families. We have established a number of programmes geared specifically for the unemployed youth, for small business development, and other forms of self-employment. We have actively contributed to all attempts at self-help and community mobilization.

We have acknowledged our debts. We have promised full payment whenever our economic circumstances permit. We demonstrated this in the 1991 budget. We have proposed a mechanism, and will be prepared to consider seriously, any other creative solution to the problem. We are totally committed to communication, dialogue, and to discussion, instead of confrontation.

We urge the unions to think again. We urge them to understand the economic constraints of the Government and the country, and to be wary of the extremely adverse consequences of their current and proposed activities. We implore the membership of the unions not to allow these actions to set back, not only the little

progress being made, but also to disrupt our social and economic development for decades to come. The stability and survival of this country are threatened. We urge you to look, not only at the issues, but at the implications; not only at the causes, but also at the consequences. If ever there was a wrong time for industrial action of the nature contemplated by the Joint Trade Union Movement, it is now.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL MARKETING AND
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BILL**

Bill to provide for the establishment of the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation and for matters incidental thereto, [*The Minister of Food Production and Marine Exploitation*]; read the first time.

NATIONAL CARNIVAL COMMISSION BILL

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [February 8, 1991].

That the bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (*Naparima*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill was introduced at a time when there was great euphoria in the country and when everyone focused his or her attention on carnival. Therefore, it appeared that the bill was indeed doing the right thing, but this bill is ill-conceived. It does not seek to give due recognition to the cultural rights of all our people. It rather seeks to enhance the recognition of the Euro/Afro sections of the population negating the significant plural components of our society.

Our community consists of human beings with a wider variety and diversity of ethnic, racial, religious and cultural descent. This phenomenon in our society is a challenge in relation to the concept of national unity. Should we promote the interests of one group over another? Should we foster the practice of divide and rule? Is the Government trying to set one group against another for the purpose of its own political ends, thus making it easier to maintain power? The Government seems to have selfish political objectives in mind when it considers a Carnival Commission instead of a cultural commission as envisaged in the NAR manifesto. The Government deliberately ignored the authenticity of the other interest groups in this culturally plural society of ours. Should carnival be promoted at the expense of the national culture; or is carnival the national culture?

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2.05 p.m.

I must refer to pages 32 and 33 of the NAR manifesto, in which the broad demands for cultural development are stated:

"There can be little real and lasting progress in Trinidad and Tobago without a fundamental change in attitudes and outlook, in the way we see ourselves and others, and in the way we relate to our past. A cultural resurgence in the context of a new nationalism, is required for a new thrust in social and economic development."

At page 33 states:

"Cultural Priority: The NAR's initiative in the area of culture will forever be inspired by the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of our society, and inspired by the cultural heritage of our nation. An NAR Government will give every encouragement to the cultural and spiritual development of all our communities and will cherish the free and spontaneous process of cultural syncretism that is evolving and which will blossom and bloom in the future."

"National Commission on Culture: The NAR will appoint a National Commission on Culture to provide direction and to advise on matters related to cultural presentation and development. Among its functions would be the identification of places and structures of historical and cultural significance for preservation and restoration."

The objects of the bill are:

- "(a) to make carnival a viable national cultural and commercial enterprise;
- (b) to provide the necessary managerial and organizational infrastructure for the efficient and effective presentation and marketing of the cultural products of the festival; and
- (c) to establish permanent arrangements for researching into, preserving and permanently displaying the annual accumulation of carnival products created each year by the craftsmen, musicians, composers and designers of the festival."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask at this juncture: are Parang, Divali, Phagwa and other festivals not authentic and legitimate aspects of our culture that deserve their places in the scheme of things? Have we thought out this matter and thought out as much that in this ethnic and multiracial society, their framework for cultural

development must be properly viewed? We seem to have deliberately ignored the inclusion of the authentic festivals in the country other than carnival for equitable state treatment.

An attempt was made to portray the evolution of carnival as the medium for indigenous protest. Are we not confused about our self-hood in trying to claim it as the greatest show on earth emanating from the bowels of the plantation society? According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "carnival" is the merrymaking and festivity that takes place in many Roman Catholic countries in the last days and hours of the pre-Lenten season." It coincides with the fact that carnival is the final festivity before the commencement of the austere 40-days lent during which time Catholics abstain from eating meat.

The historical origin of carnival is also obscure and possibly has its roots in the primitive festival honouring the beginning of the New Year, though it is also possible that the beginning of carnival in Italy may be linked to the pagan festivals of Saturnalian, Lupercalia and bacchanalia. The carnival played a significant role in the development of popular theatre, vernacular songs and folk dances.

Obviously, carnival is associated with Roman imperialism and the simultaneous expansion of the Roman Catholic church. The origin of carnival has nothing to do with Africa, India, China and the Middle Eastern countries. It really belonged to our colonial masters and mimicked by those who were exploited.

The African presence in the West and in the West Indies is marred by its almost total deculturization and permitted assimilation into the value system of the colonial master. I suppose it was this emasculation that led the Black Power Movement to search for its identity, among other things, in the 1970s. The bill before us has no philosophical and historical background that gives proper focus to our cultural development.

I agree with the honourable Prime Minister as he addressed the 37th Anniversary Liberation Celebration of the National Evangelical Spiritual Baptists on Wednesday, March 30, 1988 at the Jean Pierre Complex, when he said in part:

"Your faith is rooted in ancient Yoruban ritual and symbols which resisted the mightiest attempts at eradication. These elements were married overtime to the Christian practices which were rarely fully understood or accepted by the transported Africans.

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In the post-emancipation period, the ex-slaves developed a spirit of independence which enabled them to fashion out of established Christian beliefs as well as tenets of Orisha societies and other traditional groups, a form of worship that was more realistic to their unique circumstances."

In spite of the African resistance to the eradication of his cultural practices, the colonizer was able to re-fashion his world view and I would have no doubt, that his indulgence in carnival was permitted to achieve the end, cultural re-orientation.

2.15 p.m.

We cannot deal with carnival without putting it in its cultural context. Culture in its broadest sense is the effort by man to give creative expression to his understanding of the world about him and of his past. How can we in this society behave as though carnival alone is the instrument of culture in this multi-ethnic and plural society? It is my contention that we cannot and must not legislate for the entrenchment of carnival alone. Other forms, such as the remnants of the indigenous presence of parang and the significant contributions of East Indians to culture in this plural society, must be taken into account. Yes, every creed and race must find an equal place and there would emerge a unity in diversity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you see why the bill is difficult to support? It is ill-conceived, insensitive, bigoted, appealing to the political support of a significant interest in the society and excluding from state support, such important festivals as Phagwa, Parang, Divali and others.

We have existing side by side, two or more significant groups whose cultural practices differ from each other in varying degrees. There is a measure of hybridization and original cultural practices which have been modified but certain cultural distinctiveness does characterize certain groups in the society today. What should be the focus in the cultural relationship between citizens of African descent and those of East Indian descent? Would there be further bills introduced to give support to the authentic expression of other groups in the society? Or when this is finished, will the interest of other groups be forgotten by the Government?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I quote Sahadeo Basdeo from the *Trinidad Guardian* of Thursday, March 19, 1987 on pages 10 and 11—

"It is clear to any impartial observer that the State, through political machinery, has in the past, been associated quite openly with that aspect of our national culture emanating from the black experience. There was no economic,

social and political reason for this, dictated mainly by the politics of survival. Indian culture has yet to receive similar consideration.

Let us not be fooled into believing that token financial grants which are given to celebrate Phagwa is an indication of the opportunity for the free and equal cultural development with other sub-cultures in the society. The receipt of financial grants should be a right.

We need not only financial grants from the State, but a serious, genuine and honest sense of commitment to the growth of Indian culture in Trinidad by the State—a commitment which must be visible in all ways."

Where are the voices of protest now? Have they been silenced? Having become members of the Cabinet and Ministers of Government, they have lost their fortitude. They are now silent like whitewashed tombs in the graveyard of history.

Let the hon. Minister tell this nation how much money from the nation's coffers is spent on carnival from her Ministry. Let her also tell us how much money is spent from the Ministry of Works as a backup service. Let her tell this nation how much money is being spent on East Indian culture and other festivals each year. If I am becoming cynical, it is because of my experience of making representation that results in little or no response. Then this Government would have the gall to tell others that they do not have proper representation.

Will the Member for Nariva, an eminent historian, not say anything about the great inequity in this bill? I am appalled at the deafening silence by the learned men of East Indian descent on the Government benches who sit unmoved by the bigoted bill as though their convictions are worth 30 pieces of silver. Have mercy upon them.

I applaud the Members for Tobago West and Arouca North for giving expression, with pride, to the promotion for the search of their African identify. I am irritated when you seek to find equality and equity for East Indians, that you are termed, racist. If I admire and support the struggle of Nelson Mandela, then I must admire and support the struggle of the Member for Couva North. Progress in our nation could never be the stultifying of the genuine and creative response of a major component of the whole. Granted the East Indian entry into the society began in earnest from 1845, it is the more reason to recognize that his life was tough under indentureship, his cultural attire was not subjected to the same kind of ravages under slavery, yet his mode of existence is most authentic.

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Again, in an article in the *Trinidad Guardian* of January 9, 1988—"Hinduism sidelined in Trinidad and Tobago Culture" Sahadeo Basdeo was quoted as saying—

"There has never been a genuine effort by the Government to understand and foster the development of Indian culture, so much of which is the product of the Hindu experience. Therefore what is significant of all of this? That despite window dressing which has occurred here and there in respect of the support for Indians, Hindu culture, the state still treats that aspect of our culture emanating from afro-Caribbean society as dominant. East Indian cum Hindu culture is peripheral and so often deliberately sidelined. In fact, it is not only treated as inferior but it is referred to as misplaced or displaced. Hindus in this country or this region have never been made to feel that they are equal if only because of the glaring reality of the situation."

2.25 p.m.

I could not have said this better, but it would seem that the dominant Euro/Christian value system is the desired component of our national culture. Why should the East Indian culture be treated as an outcast of the society? He has paid his dues. Like any other group in the society, he has paid his dues. Like the African slaves before them, the East Indian supplied an adult workforce, facilitating the maintenance of the production of the colony's staples under the plantation system and contributed to their employers' prosperity. The Indians played a vital role in agriculture which determined the status of agriculture in Trinidad with lasting effects, and they still do so in Caroni and Naparima and wherever you have a lot of agriculture, they still make their very worthwhile contribution.

It is no use my looking at the functions of the Commission as articulated in the bill because the bill is philosophically and historically ill-conceived; it seems that many people will be left out of fair treatment for their cultural efforts and way of life by this Government, and that is most undesirable, if not ill-advised.

The bill does not contain a holistic view of the Trinidad society and if accepted would serve to drive a wedge in the unity of our people. The bill has ignored the United Nations' criteria with respect to the recognition of diverse cultures; the bill has been a betrayal of the promise of the manifesto with respect to the National Cultural Commission, therefore, unless this bill is reconsidered, unless this Government takes very seriously the other aspects of our authentic culture in this

society, the bill will have no other effect than to always pose one group against another.

Sometimes I wonder whether or not we are members of the international community and whether or not we look at some of the tenets that the international community has enunciated for the guidance of governments in its membership. I really want to refer to the Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Co-operation adopted and proclaimed on November 4, 1966, by the General Conference of UNESCO.

The Declaration sets out a series of principles prepared as guidelines for governments, authorities, organizations, associations and institutions responsible for cultural activities and among them the following:

- Each culture has a dignity and value which must be respected and preserved;
- Every people has the right and duty to develop its culture;
- Nations shall endeavour to develop the various branches of culture side by side and as far as possible, simultaneously, so as to establish a harmonious balance between technical progress and the intellectual and moral advancement of mankind.

Do we have any concern sometimes for some of these principles enunciated by the international community? I have nothing against carnival. I enjoy it immensely; my behaviour, perhaps, has been shaped by some of these influences, but in a nation such as ours, to promote one aspect of culture and to give it state financial backing is indeed a discriminatory act; it is so discriminatory that it leaves much to be desired.

My wishes would have been to see a bill before this House on the cultural commission and I think the Member for San Juan made the point—and I pay tribute to her for this—in which carnival will find its rightful place; other aspects of culture will find their rightful places and the country would start integrating the cultural differences at a level at which we can all be proud.

In 1989 I had the honour to represent this Parliament at a Commonwealth seminar in London and I was taken for a visit to the Commonwealth location where

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all the cultural artifacts and cultural items were housed, and when I reached to the Trinidad section, pan was the only thing that Trinidad had to offer and I could not understand it. How could a country like Trinidad, so diverse with so significant varying types of groups, portray to the international community that pan alone is the cultural product of this country? If that is deliberate, it is wicked; if it is not deliberate, then something must be done to improve upon our international relations.

As I said, because this bill is so badly ill-conceived philosophically and historically, there is no need for me to go to the nitty gritty because it does not merit the time and effort, therefore, I suggest that the Government, if it has any decency, recalls the bill and bring a new bill that will give a proper place to all our cultures in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Minister of the Environment and National Service (Hon. Lincoln Myers): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a brief contribution to this debate. I did not really intend to speak but I took note of the objectives of the bill.

The main objective is to establish and incorporate a national carnival commission for Trinidad and Tobago. The commission is to have its headquarters in Trinidad and Tobago and may establish branches internally and externally. There are a number of objectives to be met by the commission, namely, to make carnival a viable, national cultural enterprise; to provide for the necessary managerial and organizational infrastructure to efficiently and effectively carry out its mandate and to establish permanent arrangements for researching and preserving items emanating out of carnival activities.

So when I look at the main objectives of the commission, I find it exceedingly difficult to accept some of the very pernicious charges which have been levelled against the bill.

2.35 p.m.

Let us frankly look at carnival. Carnival is one of the activities in this country which is perhaps, we might say, democratic to the extreme. It is a festivity that bars no one from participation. So that you may come from whatever social, cultural, or religious group, and you are free to participate in carnival. No holes barred. So that to take a position that carnival is being given some special treatment *vis a vis* other cultural activities and groups in the country, is rather to take a position that seeks, at every turn, to maximize the division in this country. We must not have that.

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The records will show that a variety of cultural organizations in the country receive state funding. The records will also show that anybody could participate in carnival. You simply have to walk the streets around carnival time to see this. Is it not true that some of the most successful calypsonians in the country today are people of East Indian heritage? Are we to deny them that heritage simply because they participate in carnival, or are we to willingly welcome such participation? There are some who may wish to deny their brothers and sisters coming from a different cultural group the right to participate, but carnival is no such thing. If carnival was born out of protest, perhaps, some of those very people who are participating now are protesting their lack of freedom of expression within certain cultural areas. Perhaps, I do not know. What I am clearly sure about, is that carnival is a very democratic expression in the country and no one is barred from participation, whether by race, class, religion, geography or whatever.

We are also seeing, as a result of activities at carnival, that not only are people from differing backgrounds being involved in calypso, but some of the finest panmen in the country are not of Afro-Trinidadian extraction. They are from a variety of extractions which also simply gives further evidence to the fact that carnival can absorb many different streams. It is truly wicked if we are to deny that carnival has that malleability.

It is now true that a number of instruments that had not been part of the early carnival expression are now finding their way into carnival and people are enjoying those instruments. *[Interruption]* We are addressing this matter and this is what we should focus on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I urge you to address the Chair and forget the side talk. Order gentlemen, please! Order hon. Members!

Mr. Myers: At every turn they would wish to move the debate in a direction that is inimical, in my view, to the best interest of the country. We cannot, day after day, week after week, sit here and listen to this venom. We simply have to put a stop to it. *[Interruption]* I simply found it rather difficult to sit on this side of the House and listen to Members on the other side simply taking a bill like this, and wanting to turn it into another debate on ethnicity and, race and seeking all kinds of negative interpretations on a very simple and straightforward matter.

I have no difficulty at all in saying that as a son of this soil, I am quite prepared to accept that there is no mother Africa, and no mother India, for those of us who

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authentically wish to develop Trinidad and Tobago. This is not to deny any of our ancestral linkage but to understand that this is our place and at the end of the twentieth century we had better get serious about that.

So that when you speak about pan, for example, you must know that the reason pan is out there, is because it is an indigenous, authentic development that came out of the bowels of this country and that is why it is out there. It is an instrument that was born out of the struggle, out of the belly of this country. That is something that each and every one of us, regardless of race, culture or geography should feel proud of. We should not look at the pan on display on the international stages, as if that only represents part of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago and it does not represent others. It is symbolic of the entire nation of Trinidad and Tobago and every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago should feel proud of that.

Let us even, on some occasion, put behind us all of this negativism and as a people begin to address the building, even gradual, of a cultural infrastructure in this country that is not exclusive of any group and allow for full participation. In my view, the establishment of this carnival commission is an instrument that will take us along the route to creating or facilitating within the country, a situation that would allow for the full expression of carnival, regardless from what cultural stream one may come.

Therefore, I commend this bill to the Parliament and people of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

2.45 p.m.

Mr. John Humphrey (*St. Augustine*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it is a great pity that the Member for St. Ann's East did not address the pertinent issue raised by my colleague from Naparima. The Member for Naparima directed the attention of this House to what, in fact, is the official policy of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago adopted by the Cabinet when I was a member, the manifesto of the NAR of the 1986 general election.

Members of Cabinet at the time will recall that at a regular sitting of Cabinet, we unanimously agreed that what was promised to the electorate as contained in the NAR manifesto of the elections of 1986 would be adopted as official government policy, and that we would seek to deliver on the promises that we made, both in the manifesto and during the campaign. The Member for Naparima

dealt specifically with a promise that was made relative to the establishing of a commission on culture and, quite rightly, it is a commission on the national culture of Trinidad and Tobago, and not carnival *per se*.

As an opponent of the NAR regime today, I would welcome their deeper control of carnival, because that is a few more nails in their coffin. The bill before us proposing this Carnival Commission, how different is the structure of what is being proposed from the one that exists? In fact, I am sure that they are going to propose the first set of commissioners as being those who now sit.

Hon. Member: No, they want to fire them.

Mr. Humphrey: They do? I do not think so, because they have in that commission loyal servants of the regime.

Why I say that the more they control, the happier as an Opposition politician I am, is that from the control of the existing committee everybody is unhappy. Everybody who participates in any way in the carnival celebration is unhappy. Let us look at it. Steelbands are now saying that carnival is killing the steelband movement. They are saying that. Pan Trinbago as the representative body of the steelband movement is saying that the way carnival is organized and controlled, you are killing the steelband movement. Now, that is a very serious charge indeed.

There is no place in the carnival organization for steelbands other than the Panorama competition, and those steelbands emerge with three months of intensive work to perform in one or two shows and then to disappear until the following year. They cannot take the bands in the street. They cannot organize any fund-raising activities. They do not have an opportunity to establish pan yards where they can earn a livelihood as steelbandsmen. They cannot export what they have. And it is being controlled by a bunch of pseudo politicians.

Calypsonians are completely unhappy with the way carnival is organized by the National Carnival Commission, quite happy however with the way they organize their own aspects of involvement in carnival, the tents. They are happy with that.

Masqueraders, bandleaders and designers are completely unhappy with the way it is organized. I can give a personal testament to that. I spent three weeks building a particular costume for my wife. Her enjoyment was destroyed by having to wait at the head of Frederick Street for four hours to be able to get on the stage. To do what exactly?

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Carnival is being destroyed by those who organize it. Carnival, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a festival of the streets. It is street theatre. It is the spontaneous outpouring of the population. That is what it is supposed to be. The more you control it and try to make it a mercenary activity, as they are trying to do, is the surest way to kill it. Without the spontaneity of carnival, without the total freedom of carnival, you will have no carnival at all.

My wife, after waiting for four hours because of the way the thing was organized by the mendicants of the regime, had to leave. I had to collect her and take her home, because she is not getting any younger. Other masqueraders were allowed to go past the band that was waiting, a band with 2,500 masqueraders, and in going past, they destroyed the larger of the costumes just to be able to get on the Savannah stage. They were kept waiting there for four hours while they opened up the Jerningham Avenue entrance to the Grandstand and allowed every band that was waiting on the eastern side of the Savannah to parade, deliberately. They nearly beat up some of the organizers when they complained.

Let me explain, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am going to frame my contribution in an area of my own personal experience, which is carnival as organized and presented in Port-of-Spain. I have a lot of experience in that. I have no experience of carnival as organized anywhere else. I appreciate that carnival is decentralized and there are carnival activities all over Trinidad and Tobago, but I know about Port-of-Spain, and I know about the history of how the thing has evolved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, carnival as a spontaneous outpouring of the people at one time was banned by the colonial regime. Our people were not permitted to express themselves culturally in any kind of street activity. Because it was banned, naturally you had very negative responses to the efforts to go into the street. When the steelband was born initially, that was one of the efforts of the people, to resist the banning by the colonial regime of their natural outpouring. The steelbands for many, many years, as they were initially developing, confronted each other, very often violently, but they insisted on going in the streets. You will notice that the steelband developed as a mobile orchestra, not a static orchestra. That is how the initial development of the steelband occurred. In fact, it was in response to the need for music to dance in the streets and to perform in the streets.

It is after the initial phase of development when the people's revolutionary movement became so potent that the colonial masters of the society had to concede defeat that steelband began to organize itself in a different way. But where

carnival is concerned, the involvement of the steelband movement in carnival is a mobile involvement. The steelbands participated early in carnival by organizing bands of masqueraders and by taking those bands of masqueraders into the streets. Many steelbands, in fact, earned a degree of their revenue from organizing carnival bands.

What has happened, because people have taken control of carnival and have built a facility and have forced all participants to focus their activities on presenting something at that facility—whether it be the steelbands, the calypsonians, the masqueraders, or the bandleaders and so on—because they have imposed this facility on what would have been normally expressed through the streets of the city; it has distorted and aborted everything. I will give you a little example.

A masquerader performed in the street not only to satisfy himself or herself but to satisfy the audience that was on the pavements and, in performing, that masquerader did everything in terms of human scale. The costumes were manageable; they were designed to be carried by the individual masquerader so that the performance could be executed, and you had developing, unique characters in the world of theatre. By imposing what they boastfully say is the biggest stage in the world on the masquerader, they have converted a human being into a virtual beast of burden, no longer presenting a costume made in human scale where the human physique is capable of managing the costume, but imposing a virtual stage setting on an individual and forcing him to use mechanical support means to present it; building massive structures with wheels for mobility, and it is nothing more than that monumental stage that is demanding that of the individual performer.

My heart goes out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to any calypsonian who has to present his calypso at carnival time to that audience of 12,000, north and south stands, on that stage where the musicians are not even seen by him. They have the orchestra tucked away somewhere where the performer does not even see the musicians, where very often he or she cannot even hear the music that is accompanying him or her. It is absolutely impossible. You are doing that to cater to a mere 12,000 spectators. In fact, this year it dwindled down to about 4,000 or 5,000 because the majority of the seats were empty at nearly all the shows.

We live in an age of television. Television takes the performing arts to all of the people of the world. In fact, a case in point is that we are now witness to a war

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blow-by-blow, almost like a boxing match televised live because of what television is capable of doing.

You are in this country today, in Port-of-Spain, on Carnival Monday and Tuesday and the pre-carnival shows, forcing everyone to perform to an audience of 12,000 and you are not considering the rest of the national community, and the international community that would be interested. You are advertising the greatest show on earth and, quite frankly, our carnival has the ingredients and the potential of being the greatest show on earth, but while you have all the ingredients of producing the greatest show on earth, you produce the worst show on earth. Nobody wants to see what you produce via television. You cannot take what you capture by video camera and package it to export to anybody anywhere. The only people who are interested in seeing what takes place at the Grandstand stage are those who participate themselves.

3.00 p.m.

You can organize carnival through the pre-carnival shows and the parade of the bands so that everybody will enjoy it; you can expand the live audience from the 12,000 consigned to the North Stand and the Grand Stand to 250,000 and you can package what is performed in such a way that you have the contents that are viable for local and foreign transmissions by means of television. But the television screen is too small to present the biggest stage in the world for the viewing audience.

I do not see this new commission helping in the least. In fact, if you got rid of all the state controls and the state-offered financial support to those participating groups, perhaps, you would get a far better carnival than what we have at present. If you allow the steelbands, through their organization, to manage their participation in carnival, let them decide what they want to do in any carnival and allow them to manage the part that they play, and you allow the calypsonians to manage their part, and you allow the masqueraders to manage their part, through their respective organizations, then I believe you will get a far better carnival.

For 25 years I have proposed—and my proposal has fallen on deaf ears—that the parade of bands competition should be routed around the Savannah and not across the stage. Let it be kept on the streets and keep the bands in formation for only part of the day. Let the bands stay in formation on the route around the Savannah; build the bleachers on the periphery of the Savannah. You can

accommodate quarter of a million people who would see it live. They can enter the Savannah in their cars with all their supplies—pelau, their cooler with ice, alcohol and soft drinks. They can then park their cars and pay an entrance fee to come into the Savannah and their families can get out of their cars, sit on the bleachers and see the parade.

At the QRC roundabout, you can put one of the judging booths. Another one could be put placed at the Maraval roundabout near the Ministry of Agriculture and a third one at the Hilton roundabout and you can aggregate the points at these three stations so all the bands would stay in formation on that route. What would, in fact happen, is that the carnival bands would be presented as they were conceived by the designers and the entire band would be seen by 250,000 people.

Competition is not really necessary unless you are trying to encourage a certain improvement in the standard of carnival. I believe that masqueraders love their mas to the extent that even if you did not have a prize offered, they will present their band as designed and take pride in doing it and enjoy it. They would enjoy it because they are masqueraders and performers. If this is done, you will then free all the streets south of the Savannah for “jump up” for those members of the band and the public who generally support a particular band, to revel and enjoy themselves. So that you have the stringency of formation only for half an hour which is the time it might take to parade from the QRC roundabout to the Hilton roundabout. The bands could then go into Belmont or south or west into Port of Spain. All the bands can then be accommodated to present themselves to the viewing public and the steelbands would be encouraged to get back into their fancy portrayals.

If the pre-carnival shows are organized for the medium of television, allow the television experts to have an input into the design of the facilities for these shows, so that you can capture those presentations on video-tape. You will then have the material that you can package for exporting. Once you package material for export, you will be encouraging performers, not only to make the effort for the carnival weekend, but to make the effort for all time because if they produce viable television production, they will have an opportunity to take those abroad.

Let me give an example: What are the dimensions of the culture that go into carnival? The music. To begin, it is the calypsonians who compose it. We have the compositions and we have the performers of the calypso. We also have those who play the music—the steelbands and the conventional bands; you have the dancers

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who emerge in costumes; you have the themes that the bandleaders have devised that could be the basis of a beautiful stage production; you have the actors because it is a tremendous amount of drama. In fact, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro just told me that he played mas with Wayne Berkeley. In fact, I had a chance to see Wayne Berkeley on television and I think he deserves the prize of Band of the Year on the basis of his presentation at the Savannah.

In addition to the performance—and in Berkeley's band you had performance; in Minshall's band there is always performance—you have the capacity to design and build the most exquisite stage setting for these presentations. Each one of the characters who present themselves at the Kings and Queens and individual competition, is virtually a stage setting. So you know you have the capacity to produce exquisite, live stage settings and if you package that for screen and television, you will have something completely viable. But you must separate that from the parade of the bands on Monday and Tuesday. It is a completely different thing. You can ask a bandleader, and these days he is very well-organized. It is amazing how a small committee working with a few employees, can produce costumes for 2,500 masqueraders and deliver those costumes on time. It is tremendous business organization that goes into carnival.

3.10 p.m.

If you do this and if the Government, instead of forming a commission which you do not really need—proof of it is that the Carnival Development Committee in the days of the PNM and the National Carnival Commission in the days of the NAR have not really been able to solve the problems; simple logistic problems they cannot solve. For example, they built a stadium that can accommodate 30,000 people and you cannot use it for carnival. How ridiculous can you be? You do not have to build stands and demolish them every year at tremendous expense to the national carnival. You have a facility sitting right there.

The stadium is a perfect setting for the presentation of carnival bands and other carnival shows. But you cannot get in and out because the marathon tunnel is too small. It is designed to human scale. It was not designed for the massive structures that are built. If however carnival goes to what I am proposing you would be able to use it.

Try to envisage a particular pre-carnival show that is organized by two or three of the leading bandleaders, where each present an hour of entertainment based on the theme of his carnival band, where they decorate the stage on the basis of the

theme and they present a show including calypsonians, dancers, steelbands, brass bands or other bands and a degree of theatre. Try to imagine the quality of such a show.

Many years ago I visited Las Vegas which is really phenomenal—it is unbelievable—and I saw several of the shows presented at the hotels in Las Vegas.

Mr. Sudama: Nude shows?

Mr. Humphrey: The Member for Oropouche wants to know if the shows were nude. They were not nude. I remember one particular show which was the *Folie Berje* taken from Paris; reproduced in Paris by the French people and presented at that hotel. A phenomenal show. I will never forget sitting there and looking at the show, thinking of what we could do if we had the opportunity to produce something like that. In fact, we could produce something far more spectacular with the kind of talents that we have. But we do not get that opportunity. Why? Because you do not do anything through the carnival experience to allow the emergence of that kind of thing.

What I am proposing would do that. In organizing the pre-carnival shows for television, you would in fact be doing that because you would be packaging shows in a certain scale that would be manageable and be themselves exportable as live shows, apart from the fact that you are packaging it from television transmission which enables you to sell it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you approach it in that way, you will satisfy your live audience, all the people who are professionally engaged in the carnival effort and all citizens who want to just participate. Because they will all have the opportunity. Families will be able to participate as groups by going and sitting in the bleachers. Others will be able to participate by following the bands and jumping with the bands outside the arena for presentation. All groups will be satisfied.

So what you need is no carnival commission. What you need are people with ideas. Twenty-five years ago, when I first proposed this, it was knocked down by so many spurious arguments. The first argument I remember, was one related to colonial days. The argument was that when the colonial Governor was in charge of this country and carnival finally reached the streets, they confined the poor people of Port-of-Spain to an area south of Park Street. They were not permitted to go north of Park Street. The Savannah routes were kept for the bourgeois of the society where they went around on trucks throwing confetti and streamers and

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making rhythm with "shac-shac" and "scrapers" and so on. That was the argument used then against going around the Savannah.

But, the stubborn person that I am, I did a survey of the Savannah—paid for out of my own pocket—locating every tree, measuring the space that every tree allowed, for the erection of bleachers. With the exception of one or two trees that would have had to be pruned, you could build bleachers to accommodate at that time, 250,000 people. But, I was written off then, as no doubt what I am proposing now is going to be ignored.

I notice the Prime Minister is now taking an active personal interest in carnival. I was hoping he would have visited the "Poison" camp because as I helped with the designs—

Mr. Ramnath: That is a dangerous camp.

Mr. Panday: Election year John, you could expect anything.

Mr. Humphrey: I see that he promised the steelbands that they would have their panyards by next year. I do not know why the promise is for next year. Why not this year?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I honestly do not see anything of benefit to the national festival of carnival coming out of this measure. If the group that is in charge now, with the moneys that are released to it, cannot resolve the problems which have made everybody unhappy, how exactly are you going to resolve the problems by such a group by an Act of Parliament? It is just going to get worse.

It is a pity that for this debate we could not make an exception and call before the bar, the actual participants and listen to what they have to say; bring my wife to the Parliament to say what she went through. I produced an exquisitely beautiful costume and she was not able to present it at the Savannah or to the television audience for the simple reason that she was kept waiting to go on stage for four hours, and at her age, she just could not take the grind. When they started to destroy her costume, she left.

Bring her and let her tell you how difficult it is to carry a costume like that. I know, because I am the one who designed and made it for her and I know how difficult it is for a woman to carry something like that. It was not heavy, but you see the problem is not only the weight of the costume, you have other forces to contend with. You have the wind factor that is a force to contend with. You have

other masqueraders who do not make room for you and the problem, in her case, was that they would not make room for her and they abused her. *[Interruption]* For the information of the Member for Point Fortin, I have been one of the main consultants to Peter Minshall over many, many years on how his structures can be carried and how they can stand.

3.20 p.m.

Hon. Member: Do you think carnival is dying?

Mr. Humphrey: It is dying, there is no question about it and this bill before us today makes it final. Mind you, as an opposition politician, as I said in the beginning, I welcome it because when the next election comes it will not be difficult to speak to steelbandmen, masqueraders and calypsonians about the way carnival is organized, and to persuade them that if we put the organisation in their hands with certain guidelines and making available certain resources that they will be a far happier group of people.

I support what my colleague, the Member for Naparima, proposed and that is, they withdraw this bill, reframe it in response to what was promised in the manifesto and structure instead a national cultural commission along the lines of this commission and let carnival be just a part of the responsibility of such a commission because quite frankly, you do not need a group such as this to manage and control carnival. The more management and control is the worse it is going to be for those who are involved, as year after year has demonstrated.

There are certain carnival bands this year that were not able to reach the Savannah. I do not know what the conditions were in Couva and San Fernando. I suggest that you put the control of the mas in the hands of the people who are involved and that Government release resources for its management, and you will get a happy carnival.

So with those suggestions, I support the sentiments of the Member for Naparima.

Mr. Kenneth Butcher (*San Juan/Barataria*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Minister responsible for culture piloted the bill last Friday, she indicated that it is a simple bill, therefore, she did not expect a lot of opposition. The records will show that out of six opposition Members which contributed, the debate went in a direction which we did not expect. I want to make some suggestions to the hon.

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Minister so that in her winding up she might be able to refute some of the arguments which we have had.

There were some points made by the Members of the Opposition of which I think we should take note. The Member for Laventille indicated that the policy of the Government calls for a national commission on culture. If the Government is going contrary to the policy, then the Minister must explain why.

We have brought a bill to establish a national carnival commission which is a segment of the cultural commission, it is a part of. When we speak about the development of culture in Trinidad and Tobago, we are thinking about art, lifestyle and customs, our very existence; that is what we are speaking about. Therefore, if we follow what we have in the manifesto and bring the cultural commission on stream, it will embody some of what we have in the carnival commission, but it will be broader than that. We will be dealing with the widest possible development of culture in Trinidad and Tobago and some of the fears which the Member for Naparima has will not exist because under the commission for culture we can set up sub-committees for carnival, Phagwa, Divali, for the arts, the institutions which we need to develop and we will not have the problem which we are experiencing in the Parliament today.

So I want to find out and maybe the Minister would clarify: Why are we establishing a carnival commission when we should be establishing a cultural commission?

When we look at the composition for the commission we see that they have three representatives from different associations and I think that was a sore point as well, in that even under a carnival commission you need wider representation. I was reading an article on Sunday, it was an interview with Peter Minshall, captioned, "Why I am not bringing out a band this year." When I read that article I realized the amount of information and help that this gentleman would like to give; I wonder where he will fit into the scheme of things, to make our carnival better. I want to quote him from the *Sunday Guardian* of February 10:

"Very simply: I want to create work that would touch people. I want to make the most wonderful and exciting mas that I can conceive. This is exactly the problem. I am prevented, seriously restricted from doing what I want to do. Anyone who might want to do his best work in the medium of mas is similarly restricted. The environment in which the mas happens has so many obstacles, limitations and impediments that a mas man simply cannot do his best work.

To begin with, the standard and the systems by which the mas' is judged betray a terrible lack of respect for the mas' and the people who work to create it.

There are no qualifications for judges; no training in art—that is part of the carnival which under the present structure will be left out—or the performing arts or mas' is necessary. The criteria for judging are vague and unspecific. They fail to take into account many of the vital elements of a good mas."

I also want to highlight the Panorama finals on Saturday night. Miss Pat Bishop was commenting also on the standard of the music and she went on to indicate that where the judges were sitting—I think she was a judge—was not conducive for proper judging of the bands. We have all these people who can contribute in a meaningful way to the development of carnival in the country and I wonder where in the sphere of things, in the structure of this commission, would these people be able to make an input.

Mr. Minshall was talking about the commercial aspect of mas now which we would like to promote. He was saying the masmen who were in mas get some money and what they were doing. He said:

"They have physically blocked mas' from appearing on the stage, they have protested each effort to introduce a new element to mas' playing such as special music or lighting effects. When they cannot find a way to prohibit a new idea they have actually gotten the rules changed. They have actually persuaded the NCC to abolish the people's choice award. The most recent example concerned Tan Tan and Saga Boy, as everyone can understand these two were made to dance with each other, it was not how they looked, but what they did that mattered and despite all the regulations they were able to dance with each other on *Dimanche Gras* night because there was a provision allowing a king or a queen to have a mascot."

It was through that loophole he was able to bring his mas to the fore.

"One would think that the response of the NCC and the bandleaders might be to encourage more mas' like this, mas' that excites and entertains.

Instead, they change the rules to prevent it from ever happening again. The new rule prohibits mascots that are played by anyone over 18 years old, and no mascot can be more than half the height of the king or queen it accompanies."

Lower down, he goes on and he says:

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"The artist who wants to do good work, needs to work among people who seek to build, not to destroy; people who open doors, not close them; people who think of ways to encourage new mas,' not to banish it; people who encourage a masman to do excellent work and who congratulate him when he achieves it, not people who respond with obstructions and abuse."

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Manning: Would the hon. Member give way please? I am very grateful to the hon. Member for giving way. I wonder if the hon. Member is aware that consistent with what he has been saying, last year in the carnival competition in San Fernando, a slip was passed around to the judges suggesting what the results of the competition should have been, and it caused a major problem among the judges last year and also this year. Decency prevents me from saying who did it.

Mr. Butcher: I also see the cultural commission as a facilitator. Only four months ago there was a body set up in Atlanta called the Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Association. Jerry Gellineau is the Chairman of that.

Now, here it is that under this bill, we are trying to establish branches in foreign places, and the funding for that, according to this bill is also to come from here. I cannot understand that. If we had people outside there, Trinidadians who were now resident in other parts of the world, Atlanta, Nottinghill, Birmingham, Manchester, parts of Canada, and other parts of America, who are interested in setting up associations, why is it that we would want to establish branches outside there and have to fund them from here? Why not encourage the development of these associations, have them maybe affiliated to the National Cultural Commission and then we can guide them or influence them? Because certainly, the establishment of those associations outside there will be influenced also by the countries in which they are established, and you will very well find that the cultural branch in Atlanta will start varying in its development. It will start developing in a different direction and, therefore, we will be liaising with these associations. We should not be really controlling them from here. That is a point I would like to suggest: that we do not encourage the establishment of cultural associations abroad by the National Carnival Commission, but we encourage them as independent bodies outside there as is done in Atlanta.

The point I want to make here is that it is the Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Association, because they are not only dealing with mas. They are dealing with other aspects of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidadians who go abroad

can go to these associations and get assistance in other forms, even in terms of settling into the country.

The other point I want to make concerns "Exemptions and responsibilities", clause 12 (3):

"No Commissioner or Officer shall be subject to the discretion and powers of the Auditor General."

Last Friday I was looking at the powers of the Auditor General. I could not get it here today, but the part that I was interested in is that the Auditor General had the power to question officers and look at their books. I wanted to know why commissioners or officers of this commission should not be subject to the discretion and powers of the Auditor General. Suppose we get some people with the mentality of the administrators of the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association running the National Carnival Commission, what would happen if they did not have this power, is that every March after carnival we would have to appoint a commission of enquiry. That is a costly and time-consuming thing. This particular clause must be amended so that all commissioners and officers will be subjected to the discretion and powers of the Auditor General.

Last Friday, I was not prepared to debate this bill but something happened to me Saturday night at the finals of Panorama. Then, all sorts of little things started to happen. I just told you what would happen if we had people with the mentality of the administrators of Trinidad and Tobago Football Association handling this. I went to Panorama on Saturday. I went early to see the start of the "Pan around the Neck" competition. Normally, I go to North Stand but I was invited to go to the Grand Stand and I went in very early. I was escorted to a position into a little corner behind some stanchions.

When I realized I could not see the stage or I would not be able to see and hear what was going on properly, I got up and went where I was most comfortable. I do not normally go to the Grand Stand, maybe something sent me there, because after that happened to me I went over to the North Stand and during the course of the show the announcer, Mr. Tony Williams had to make repeated calls asking patrons to clear the aisles because the Fire Service could close down the show. He had to repeat that time and time again. I was wondering why we should have the overcrowding of a facility that is earmarked to take X number of persons. If the North Stand is supposed to take 7,000 patrons, why must we have 10,000 inside

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there? Do you know what struck me? There were tickets being taken up, not going into the box and coming back out.

I want this clause to state, "every officer and every commissioner must be subject...." If you have 7,000 seats print 7,000 tickets. Close the gates. We will not have to make repeated calls to patrons to clear the aisles. How do we know that tickets are not being overprinted? The reason I ask that is because I started to see Trinidad and Tobago Football Association administrators with NCC tags on them. That is what has me concerned.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must have checks and balances for all times. We are trying to pass a bill; we are making a law, but we must have the checks and balances so that whoever should come, we will be able to have the checks and balances for this. The perception is very important. The perception on how we manage, and things like this, is very important. I want to inform the Minister of National Security today that the image of the leader of the Defence Force—the Defence Force is one of our pillars of law and order in this country—and the image of the Defence Force Commander, looking to continue to be involved in an administration where officers admitted to doing a con job on this country, I say that image is not so good for this country. Many people are concerned that the Chief of the Defence Force would want to continue to be associated with an administration, of which he was a part and continues to be a part, that he can be involved to that extent.

The Minister of National Security should be wary of that. It is not healthy for this country when we see our leaders and leaders who are supposed to uphold law and order, frustrate young people in this country. I say this in passing, and maybe on another occasion I will have to speak about it in more depth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, it has been drawn to my attention that the Seemungel Commission is still sitting, so we ask you to steer clear of any comments that might prejudice the sittings.

Mr. Butcher: I just mentioned that in passing.

Mr. Sudama: Could I inquire what the Seemungel Commission is all about?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would you please continue. The Chair has advised you to steer clear of any further comments on this matter.

Mr. Butcher: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I suggest that we should look first at establishing the National Cultural Commission. If it is that we are not establishing the National Cultural Commission and we are establishing a Carnival Commission to deal with culture, the Minister must say so. If it is that we are going to establish the National Cultural Commission, then we will also want to know that. But in the absence of a policy on culture, as it were, I want to know where these things are really fitting into the overall scheme of things. So during the committee stage, I will raise one or two other points that I feel might be important towards the passing of this bill.

Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Ramnath (*Couva South*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been away from this Chamber for a little while, and I realize that I have missed a great deal, after having listened to such brilliance coming from this side of the House. I think the debate has been going very smoothly and constructively, except for the comments from the Member for St. Ann's East, the Minister of the Environment who has left the Chamber. It is a great pity that he is not here to listen to arguments against what he had to say.

First of all, I congratulate my dear friend from Baratavia/San Juan for his masterly contribution here this afternoon, having been freed from the shackles of oppressive political rule. I am quite sure that the Parliament and the country has benefited from the suggestions that he has made to the bill before us.

I observe that the Member for San Fernando East is in a very happy moment this afternoon, but I think one of the tragedies that the country experiences today with respect to carnival is the fact that for 25 years under the PNM, they did not seem to know, until today, what is good for carnival and what is good for the country in relation to carnival. Of course, we have been told that they have been born again and they have repented for their deeds, and they are a new group.

Having heard the Member for St. Augustine, who incidentally did not have to prepare a speech to contribute to this debate, one would understand the great frustration that people experience today in this most important industry. What is very interesting is that everyone in the country talks about the industry that is carnival. In fact, bandleaders, calypsonians and steelbandmen are the subject of all kinds of political discussion on reforming carnival and having a role to play in

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building an industry. But every year after carnival, the same people to whom promises have been made about restructuring this major event continue to complain about the very serious problems they experience, particularly problems which could have been solved if there was proper administration.

When I first saw the bill, I thought the objective was to put in place an institution that would have solved some of those problems or many of the problems. I totally agree with my colleagues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we should have perhaps first seen the National Cultural Commission Bill so that we could have looked at culture in its entirety rather than different aspects of culture.

I really have no problem with the establishment of some kind of organization to support carnival, whether it is in the form of making assistance available to the various actors in this most important area of national life, as suggested by the Member for St. Augustine. Perhaps the National Carnival Commission might want to concentrate on reorganizing carnival in the manner that he has suggested.

Those of us who have had the opportunity to go to the Dimanche Gras for many years and to look at carnival in Port-of-Spain and elsewhere have had the experience of seeing political people on almost every single occasion every year being responsible for the administration of carnival. The PNM is well-known for appointing their cohorts and their field workers; for renting chairs from their friends. The NAR is known for printing tickets from their friends' companies. We all know of the enormous frustration that patrons must experience at the Savannah, as so well put across by the Member for Barataria/San Juan.

What is in fact happening is that Governments are of the view that one way of patronizing their supporters, one way of making them happy, is to appoint them to a carnival commission, whether it is CDC or NCC, and very little consideration is given to those people in the society who have the administrative and managerial skills to administer this most important industry. We must see carnival as an industry, as a major economic organization that cannot be managed by those who profess loyalty to the political party that is in power. And we know them, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We go to the various shows and we see them all the time. While they try their best, because of their limitations and because of their lack of experience in management, and because of a feeling that they can do what they want because they are political appointees, every year we suffer the same fate. We experience what we experience as a result of total mismanagement of the carnival.

When I see that the Minister is going to appoint the chairman and deputy chairman of this commission, immediately I feel worried that, depending on the Government in power, we will see in those positions, persons who have professed their loyalty to the Government during the election campaign, or during other periods of political activity. I do not think that it is important for the Minister to want to get involved in something like that. If the intention of the bill, as stated, is to make it a viable, commercial industry, what we really need is for the commissioners to decide among themselves the kind of role that they will play and who will play that role. But the insistence that the Minister must appoint these people will defeat the purpose of the bill and, that is, to have an efficient, managerial team to administer carnival.

I do not play mas. I have never played, but I am a spectator. I have never missed a Dimanche Gras presentation for 15 years, nor have I missed carnival, and I enjoy the exhibition of those people who have committed themselves to a lot of activity on these days. I can appreciate how frustrating it must be for those people who have invested a considerable amount of money, time and energy to experience the frustration, as the Member for St. Augustine stated here today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these carnival commissions totally ignore the development of carnival outside of Port-of-Spain, and that is what I want to address for a little while here today. For some reason, those who participate in carnival outside of Port-of-Spain are not given any consideration. They are not encouraged to develop carnival in the local communities. In fact, I think all of us will recall, those of us who come from the countryside and from Tobago, that in each population centre many years ago there was a form of carnival that was supported by the local people and enjoyed by those people who did not feel it was necessary to head to the cities in order to enjoy carnival.

The manner in which the administrators in these local areas are treated leaves a lot to be desired. They wait for months upon months to get their very small grants from the National Carnival Commission, and in many cases they are given grants that are totally unsuitable to meet the needs of these organizations. In fact, they must depend on the county council to erect a stage in Chaguanas on some tubs with some planks and sometimes not even sheeted so people are not able to parade properly on such a stage. They have to beg the businessmen in the area. In fact, they are reduced to beggars in the community while the carnival in Port-of-Spain is being totally sponsored by the state.

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What has happened as a result is that there is no incentive given to would-be good bandleaders to continue in the years to come, because many times they cannot get the prizes which have been offered by the committee because the Carnival Commission ignores mas in Couva, Princes Town, Rio Claro, Chaguanas, Arima, and various other areas outside of Port-of-Spain. There has been a total neglect of these areas.

In spite of what those in the National Carnival Commission and the Ministry would like to tell us, they give you a kind of donation, some kind of pittance. There is no recognition of the contribution and the quality of presentation of the local people outside of Port-of-Spain. In fact, they are treated as stepchildren. Unless communities and companies in these areas support these bands and the local carnival commissions, the areas are threatened to be without carnival.

I have had my share of participation in the Couva Carnival Committee, and that was long before this Minister was involved in the Government. I know from experience what kind of pressures these local administrators have to undergo. So that to support a bill to organize carnival in a viable and commercial way cannot be without some guarantee that we are going to have some kind of equity in areas outside of Port-of-Spain.

What are these people going to do? Are they going to set up the same kind of local carnival development committees as they do now, or are they going to plan for carnival outside of Port-of-Spain as they do in Port-of-Spain? I would like to find out what plans exist, for example, for carnival in Couva? In Couva on carnival Tuesday, you have tens of thousands of people and you cannot walk. The entire main street of Couva for miles is without any traffic and only people. It is a shame to see so many people who come as spectators and to participate in carnival being treated to the very low level of participation by bands because of the way they are treated. They have to beg; they have to go around with sheets to various people and ask for contributions in order for them to have carnival in this area.

4.00 p.m.

This carnival commission is probably just to run carnival in Port-of-Spain and, to some extent, in San Fernando. In my view this will not make it a viable industry, nor will it decentralize carnival so that spontaneity and the contribution people would like to make to this national festival will not exist. I do not think the bill will achieve that at all. After having heard the presentation of the Member for St. Augustine, I suggest that we should send this bill to a select committee because

there is no urgency. What you are really doing is formalizing the appointments of some of the men in the NAR who we know very well who run carnival today; formalizing their appointments and giving them a little pay. You would be doing exactly what was done in the CDC when the PNM corruptly ran that organization, except what you are doing today, is simply giving it parliamentary approval and making this into some kind of institution or body corporate.

I think we should send it to a select committee of this Parliament or both Houses of Parliament and invite the main players in carnival—the Calypsonians Association, the steelbandmen, the various groups of participants—and let them appear before a select committee of this Parliament to properly give their views on what kind of organization is desirable for carnival in Trinidad and Tobago. We know the tremendous potential for this.

I happened to be in New Orleans last weekend for their carnival and had the opportunity of looking at some of the parades to see how seriously the city takes its carnival; to look at the preparation that is involved for bringing into that area the tourists, not from outside the United States, but from within the United States to participate in this most important event. In spite of current events elsewhere in the world, they were able to fill hotels in that area from within the United States to the extent that there was created a major industry for their carnival, their Mardi Gras as it is called. The businessmen, the city and people in the community were able to benefit, not only from the cultural expression of those who participated, but from the economic activities which arose out of people coming into the area.

We have a long way to go in this country to really fulfil the promise of carnival being an industry and it is only because we have been putting the emphasis in the wrong place and we have been appointing people who do not know how to manage a most important industry. I suggest that we can wait for a little while, and get those people who are involved in carnival, in a discussion.

We are told in the bill that there would be representations from various associations but that is not enough. What you need to do is to have a new concept rather than fitting in these people who currently hold important positions in the various bodies in carnival, into some kind of straight-jacketed operation rather than allowing them initially to conceptualize the industry that carnival is and the kind of celebrations we should have. It is then from such an analysis you will be able to develop the institution that will make those contributions meaningful.

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4.05 p.m.

I want to disabuse the mind of the Member for St. Ann's East that Members on this side at every turn wish to move the debate to something that is inimical to the country. I want to emphasize—it is a great pity that he is not here—that to talk about different aspects of culture is not intended at all to criticize those who participate in carnival or to seek to divide the country. It is unfortunate that in the debate we have had to listen to what the Member for St. Ann's East had to say in response to a very brilliant contribution from the Member for Naparima who sought to delve into the history and background of the development of culture in this country.

I have asked the Member for Princes Town, the Minister, why she has not continued to fund the Divali Nagar programme; why that most important cultural event in the country which made Chaguanas a most important center for cultural activity, has been shut down. That has nothing to do with whether Divali is celebrated by Hindus.

The fact is that the National Indian Council did not receive the subvention promised to them by the Ministry of Youth, Sport, Culture and Creative Arts and they were not able to receive donations by going around Chaguanas every year. As a result, a major cultural activity which brought tens of thousands of people into that main center in Chaguanas, has now disappeared; an activity which we all thought would have become institutionalized for which Chaguanas would have been remembered for a very long time.

In this very Parliament, I asked the question and the reply of the Minister was that the Government had approved it, but the money was not released. Discussions with the National Indian Council have revealed that they have not been receiving assistance from the Government over the last few years, and as a result, they have had to shut down Divali Nagar in the last year and they will have to do so this year. In fact, I think it is two years now—

Mrs. Johnson: On a point of order. I would like to state that the Chairman of the Divali committee who is also Chairman of the National Indian Cultural Council, in advising the public as to the reasons the Divali Nagar did not take place last year, did not advance the reason for that, being that the Ministry did not support them financially.

Mr. Ramnath: Well you know one thing leads to another. Did you support them financially? If you did, what contribution did you make to the Divali Nagar

committee? The fact is that you have neglected that most important committee, and that is not to turn the debate into something that is inimical to the country. It is a fact. We are talking here about cultural development, diverse cultural activities, which will make this country the kind of society that we all dream of.

When the Member for Naparima talks about other cultural activities, he is totally correct. While we must concentrate and be concerned about carnival which is perhaps our largest celebration—and there is nobody on this side or in this House or hardly anybody in the country who would deny the fact that carnival is an important celebration in this country which must continue, and must grow and develop—from the moment you talk about other areas of cultural activity, you are seeking to move the debate into an area that is inimical to the society.

The PNM did it for 30 years. They ignored other cultural activities.

Mr. Panday: And used the same arguments.

Mr. Ramnath: They treated other sections of this community as though they did not belong.

Mr. Panday: They use the same arguments the PNM used for 30 years.

Mr. Ramnath: We must change that approach. That is what we must do. We must change that approach and make citizens feel comfortable because Divali Nagar is an important economic activity for Chaguanas. We do not only want a Minister from Chaguanas, we want to have important economic activity so that for one week this new borough of Chaguanas will enjoy having something that they can boast of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, everywhere in the civilized world you go, communities—you go to Tobago, I was there recently and was well received with my leader in Pembroke when we went to a harvest—you should have seen the jubilation in Pembroke and the pleasure with which we were greeted. But you know, the harvest in Tobago is remembered as one of the most important festivals and each community wants to be associated with an important festival.

When you think of the cost of putting up a steel structure in downtown Port of Spain and removing it after carnival and the cost of putting up the North Stand in the Savannah and removing it after carnival every year, you see how millions of dollars are wasted because of a lack of planning. The cost of erecting the stage in downtown would have financed Divali Nagar for 5 years and people would have been happy because all the various cultural activities would have been able to take

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place. But the moment you raise it in the House, there are people who are prepared to see other things behind what you intend to say.

That has been a problem in this society. You must go along with the *status quo*. You must accept what the ruling class say is the dominant culture in the country and must not seek the identity which you desire. You must not seek to evolve other aspects of cultural life that are to the benefit of the country. That is what this country has had to undergo for 30 years under the PNM.

Mr. Panday: That is what we promised to eradicate. It is in the manifesto.

Mr. Ramnath: They did nothing in Chaguanas and Couva. My friend, the Member for Diego Martin Central, was born in McBean and he cannot say that they did a single thing for the people of McBean. I will deal with him at the appropriate time when he comes in McBean. He is making a set of extraneous noises in the back there. The point I want to make is that they started it all. They are the ones who are responsible for neglecting other aspects of national life and culture in this country and from the moment you talk about it, you are accused of being anti-carnival.

4.15 p.m.

I will not sit in the Parliament and have the kind of response coming from a Minister who seeks to give the impression that those of us on this side of the Parliament are opposed to carnival. If there is anything, we would like to see it grow into an industry of which we would be very proud, and not simply talk about it in magazines, brochures and literature which we send around the world.

I do not think it is necessary to identify those East Indian calypsonians. I think it is a great achievement that people from all walks of life are now getting involved in this form of expression but you can see the motive behind what the Member for St. Ann's said. I have known him for a long time so I can tell very easily. What does having East Indian calypsonians have to do with the debate before the House? What does it have to do with what the Member for Naparima said about ignoring other aspects of culture; and then concludes that we are seeking to deny these people from participating in national life? There may very well be more East Indians participating in carnival today than there might be Africans. Truly, it is a festival in which there is participation from all walks of life and a minister of Government seeks to associate a criticism from this side with respect to ignoring other aspects of culture as being opposed to carnival—imputing improper motives.

No one on this side has denigrated the steelband movement to warrant the comment coming from the Minister of the Environment. He was seeking to give the impression that the pan is something that we do not see as a major accomplishment. It is said that it is the only instrument that has been developed in the last century and the Prime Minister has been on record on many occasions and has repeated that statement. Certainly all citizens of this country are proud of this major achievement. What the Member was saying is that you do not only need to see in a steelpan in London, in the archives. What you need to see are other important aspects of the national life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. You need to see things that depict the history of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, not just the steelpan. We had comments from the Minister which gave the impression that people on this side are opposed to the steelband movement.

I want to correct these impressions and hope that we will not simply spend time to set up these small institutions because I do not know if they will now come and form a national Indian cultural commission, because they have claimed to have an organization which looks after Indian culture. I am very actively involved in certain aspects of Indian culture because of the way in which I was brought up and I am glad that I have been involved in—not promoting—but in preserving certain aspects of Indian culture which cannot be found in India today. It is original 1845 music and art that is peculiar only to Surinam, Guyana and Trinidad and which would have died as a result of the vultures who are involved in promoting a degenerate form of Indian culture simply for the purpose of large amounts of money.

We cannot ignore that aspect of our culture, it is important. Are you going to bring a bill to the Parliament to set up a national Indian cultural commission? Or are we going to see or hear from the Minister or the Prime Minister about the Indian Cultural Centre? I do not want to talk about that, I am in such a good mood, but it is something that was promised, something over which a debate took place in the politics of the country. So I am suggesting that the spirit of the manifesto to establish a national cultural commission be observed; that if we want to have carnival managed separately, we send this bill for comments or put it before a select committee so that people who are involved will have a say, for it is not sufficient merely to appoint them on these committees. Many times the people who are appointed from associations on these committees really do not represent the views of the vast majority of those associations. They usually are the most eloquent—like some Ministers, very articulate and so on—but they do not

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represent very much substance. I suggest that we get an input from these participants.

I ask the Minister very specifically to reply to the contributions of the Member for Naparima with respect to other aspects of national culture so at the end of the exercise, we will give the recognition that is due to all sectors of the community and most of all, we will preserve something that is peculiar to Trinidad and Tobago, something which makes us proudly different from other peoples in other parts of the world.

Mr. Jensen Fox (*Port of Spain North*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no problem with an arrangement where a Minister is in charge and a commission is appointed with very specific duties and that commission is responsible to the Minister because I have been long of the view that a lot of the red tape which we have seen over the last couple of years have created enormous problems in having procedures done in such a way that allows a lot of inconvenience to the public. However, I was really extremely surprised and disappointed that before us this afternoon, Members of this House will present and support a bill, where on page (ii), the final paragraph, says:

"Finally, the funding of the Commission is to come from monies appropriated by Parliament for the purpose, from fees charged by the Commission for services rendered and from funds obtained from such other source as the Minister with responsibility for finance may approve."

Then we come to page 4, clause 7:

"The Commission shall pay to each Commissioner, in respect of his office, such remuneration and allowances, as the Minister may determine on a recommendation from the Commission..."

For 25 years prior to the coming into office of the NAR Government, carnival has been conducted in the worst possible manner and the level of corruption that prevailed was unacceptable to this country. What are we attempting to do here? We go further down to clause 12, "exemptions and responsibilities" and at subclause (3) we read:

"No Commissioner or Officer shall be subject to the discretion and powers of the Auditor General."

This is unacceptable. I am of the firm opinion that the Government, of which I am part and parcel, did not come into office to indulge in practices as displayed within

this bill. I want to make it clear that I am not going to support this bill unless this is changed. Public funds are going to be used to fund this agency and at the same time we are saying that the agency will not be subject to the scrutiny of the Auditor General. What is also more amazing, when we go further down the line—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Toney: If the hon. Member would look at clause 12(5) I am sure he would relate that to subclause (3).

4.25 p.m.

Mr. Fox: We go further and we see where it is possible for public servants to be transferred to the commission. Public servants who are under the scrutiny of the Auditor General, could be brought into the commission but that scrutiny does not prevail. I find it extremely unacceptable that we can come here before this Parliament and attempt to present such a bill that is not consistent with what is set out in our initial policies.

There are other areas which I find very unacceptable. One of them is the whole question of the offices which are to be set up in foreign lands. I support the Member for Baratavia, who indicated earlier that we have organizations existing in the capitals of the world where carnival has been promoted, certainly with very little assistance, except in recent times. I understand, the Government has tried to promote the culture abroad. The initial drive in these capitals have been undertaken by people of Trinidadian and West Indian connections. They have brought carnival to these capitals and have been successful in raising the funds for these ventures.

Why then are we now saying that we are going to take public funds from Trinidad and Tobago, which are hard in coming, to promote carnival abroad?

I say this in the context, of what we are saying in the bill: that funding for these offices will come from the commission, when we have people out there who are willing to raise funds. The role of the Government certainly should be to support and give encouragement to these groups to continue to promote carnival.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.10 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made and question proposed, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, February 22, 1991.

Education System

Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (*Naparima*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, on September 28, 1991 I sought leave of the Speaker to raise a matter on the adjournment of the House. The matter concerns the unhealthy state of the education system of Trinidad and Tobago as it impacts upon teachers, children, parents, and the community. I feel that this matter is important because of the stress and difficulties being experienced by our teachers, children and parents throughout the country. The callous indifference shown by the Government in resolving the critical issues leaves much to be desired. As a matter of fact, some of the responses shown by the Government seem to be merely rhetoric, spites, threats, and condemnation of those teachers who are responsible, patriotic and dedicated to their jobs.

What are some of the critical issues in the education system today? They are, among others: the just discontent by the majority of teachers in the system; the poor maintenance of the infrastructure and the plant capacity of this vital area of national building; the negative impact of the children's education; their parents' anxiety.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the education component of the national budget is quite large. We are dealing with providing for about 300,000 children in the system with about 584 school for primary, secondary and tertiary education. The teaching establishment at this moment cannot accurately be determined but ought to be around 12,000 teachers. I am told that there has been a net reduction of about 976 teachers within the last two years, which is quite significant.

One of the most important persons in the community is the teacher, and the teacher is indeed the bulwark of the education system. They have always been the individuals to prepare the student for the world of work and responsible citizenship. Without the teacher, the society will lack the quality of refinement it needs. While their output cannot be quantified in unit production, their contribution in the society is invaluable as they nurture the children placed under their care. It is therefore fundamentally important that the teachers be equipped to discharge their functions and responsibilities.

The teacher must be able to keep body and mind together by being able to meet reasonably, their financial commitments and obligations. They need to pay for their shelter, they need to properly attire themselves, they need to put food on their tables and provide transport for themselves and their children. Many of them have long distances to go. Today we know that the teachers in the nation cannot do all

these things, and they have made their discontent known, not only in words but also in action, which can only redound to the interest of education in the years head.

What are the just demands of teachers? The implementation of the Special Tribunal Award of the consolidation of COLA (\$280) to salary and the increase of two per cent on that basis and the application of the new COLA formula of \$520 for every two-point rise in the index of retail prices; the re-introduction of the system of merit increases; the payment of arrears on COLA from 1987; the payment of arrears on the 10 per cent salary cut in 1989; the payment of arrears due to the failure to implement the Special Tribunal Award in 1989; and the payment of arrears due to the withholding of merit increases since 1987.

The Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association calculated and tabulated their earnings and losses for the years 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991. Their entitlements took into account basic salary, COLA old, COLA new, their losses, COLA old, increments, minus five per cent, mobilization tax minus two per cent, COLA new 10 per cent. So the position of the teachers has been well-documented. That would show that for the years 1986—1991 an Assistant Teacher in Range 16 would have had a total loss of \$26,556; a Teacher I in range 33 would have had a total loss of \$40,386; a Teacher II or a technical/vocational IV teacher, Range 46, would have had a loss of \$46,524.

So it is clear that the nominal losses of the teachers are quite significant. The Government's return of 10 per cent of salary cut does not come near to the just demands of TUTTA. On an average, it represents a return of approximately \$350 before tax. The return of arrears of COLA of \$30 million has to be spread among all public sector employees estimated to be between \$60,000 to \$75,000. Therefore, you are talking about a backpay of \$400 to \$500 that would be taxed on the marginal rate, on the highest rate of tax applicable to your income.

According to Government's position, teachers would continue to lose the \$280 which used to be COLA and which is now part of the salary, increments which on an average account to a loss of some \$200, the increase of two per cent according to the Special Tribunal Award of about \$80, the COLA according to the Special Tribunal Award of \$520 for every two-point rise in the index of retail prices of about \$90. This means that the teachers' salary will return to what it was in 1986. It will be worth less because from then to now, we have had two devaluations, VAT, general price increases; salaries are based on the 1983 salary scales.

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If we look back at the index of retail prices with the base year being September 1982 as 100 points, we find the following: In 1983, the value of the dollar was 0.87 points; 1984, 0.77; 1985, 0.71; 1986, 0.66; 1987, 0.60; and in 1988, 0.55; 1989, 0.50; and 1990 I am sure it might have gone to about 0.45; and 1991, to about 0.40.

The index of retail prices continues to rise, and the value of the dollar continues to fall to less than half the value. It would seem that teachers need about 100 per cent increase.

Should we bad-mouth teachers, spite, victimize and threaten them as has been the case within the recent past? The answer is no. For the good of the education system, take them into your confidence with genuine consultation, and a reasonable solution will be found. Teachers continue to work under some of the most hazardous conditions: dilapidated buildings, bad roads, unsanitary conditions, poor toilet conditions, no water, overcrowding, shift system, no chalk and other essentials, shortage of school places, larger classes, victims of the elements and no transport, in some cases, like buses. I have a series of articles from over the last month to really enumerate what has been happening, but I shall not go into the details of those. How much more could the teachers take, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The General administration and some responses to poor conditions by teachers: Applications to leave via VTEP. How many teachers applied? How many have been granted? How many left on grounds of marriage? How many abandoned their jobs? We know that many of our qualified teachers have migrated to some other countries, presumably to be babysitters and maids. Why? Because of better financial gains. How many graduate teachers have we attracted and retained? Is it not a fact that many leave once they find better paying jobs? How many temporary teachers are hired and placed under intimidation? Assistant teachers are given dates at which their appointments would cease, that is just before they render two years of service which would entitle them to greater job security. This undermines the system.

5.20 p.m.

The Government must make known what the teaching establishment is. Many areas of the school curriculum go unattended. Areas that suffer are: physical education, music, industrial arts, geography, and special education, among others.

There is a shortage of teachers thus increasing the load of the over-burdened teachers. Is it not a fact that 50 per cent of our primary schools is without appointed principals? Some teachers are leaving at age 55, some at age 50, with permission. They are replaced by Assistant Teachers III and Assistant Teachers II. Some are leaving to teach in England and other places on a contract system.

Let the Minister tell us today the state of the affairs in our current teaching system. Do not blame our current teachers. Let the Minister tell us how many primary schools are on the shift system today and why. Let us know what is the teacher/pupil ratio and what is being done to assist those teachers with extra heavy class-loads. Let the country know how many primary school teachers with university degrees are still holding the post of Teacher I and cannot be upgraded. They have to give an account of how they got their degrees and would be penalized by the Ministry after doing so. Is not that a shame Mr. Deputy Speaker?

My information is that there are 125 such teachers. Again, I do not want to raise cases where people have been deliberately kept down in the system. Those who have done something for the good of their profession have been threatened. This Government lacks the political will to rationalize the system. They frustrate the competent, willing and motivated teachers and then give the impression that teachers are unpatriotic and irresponsible.

Let the Minister tell us whether the grants for maintenance to school boards have been reduced by 50 per cent and disbursed on three-month instalments rather than on a block vote once a year. Let the Minister tell us whether the requisition disbursement has been significantly reduced so that the teachers have to dip their hands into their pockets to buy chalk and accessories. Many teachers beg, borrow and work hard in fund-raising activities to meet the needs of the school. Yet, it is said that teachers are irresponsible and unpatriotic. Are not the teachers responsible by shaking up the system before it reaches rock bottom? This is indeed working on behalf of the children in the medium and long terms.

There is no group who cares about the children and their future more than teachers. I think when teachers protest, everyone knows; when they work extra time free and on Saturdays, no one knows. What about the teachers who are currently working in schools that are unfit for occupation? I have been told that currently there are 20 schools unfit for occupation and teachers are still functioning. I have no doubt that if teachers are treated with some measure of decency, they would quadruple their efforts.

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We all know that the January to March term is the most interrupted. Maybe, it is suggesting, that Common Entrance Examination should be held in June like all other examinations. There is no need to push the panic button if Government works with TTUTA to resolve the areas of conflict.

Parents must understand that some of the difficulties to educate their children were exacerbated by the lack of bus transport, VAT, unemployment and redundancy. The parents' best friend is the teacher. Teaching is a professional and technical job. It is not like manual labour or driving a bus; it is an art that requires skill. For the uninitiated to occupy the classrooms would be the most devastating abuse of power. It is not to put parents against teachers, as that will destroy the trust between parents and teachers and thus endanger the sustained interest of teachers to their charges.

No parent would like to see teachers go on a work-to-rule schedule. It would seem that the Minister is desperate to cause friction in the community and I believe there needs to be some clarification on this matter. If the impasse is not settled, there is going to be a tremendous cost to the community such as: not producing the required talents and skills for the work place; deviance; social cost. There may be a lost generation. The education system can only be built on the foundation of the teachers. Take care of the foundation and all else would fall into place.

What, therefore, is the solution? I honestly want to ask the Government whether there has been serious consultation, taking the teachers into their confidence. It is not merely sending fax letters, it is meeting with them and trying to hammer out an acceptable solution through the collective bargaining process. I am sure that some other priorities could have been re-ordered. It would seem, therefore, that the plight of the school system today, is caused by the Government not really being concerned that the education system should be a high priority. If that were the case, rather than say, "we cannot find the money, we do not have anything", they could have re-ordered their priorities and look at things such as negotiable bonds, how to best satisfy the teachers' needs by giving them some hope in a system like this.

What frightens and terrifies me is the fact that virtually one oil company in this country—as the reports would have it—made over \$1 billion in profits recently. That company is Amoco. One wonders why their special petroleum tax was not re-ordered to the extent that there was a sliding scale of taxation so that the Government would have benefited in this system. With alarm, we read what some

of the foreign magazines had to say about the amount of profits being made by Texaco. Does it mean to say that the Government has lost the will to manage? We must consider education important and, as I said, re-order the priorities, have meaningful consultation with the teachers and, at the same time, tell them what will be done with respect to the debt that is owed to them.

This Government has acted in a very slipshod fashion; it has barely sent letters and there has been no genuine dialogue. The Government has alienated the teachers and some Members go so far that anytime teachers talk, those teachers are called communists. What a way to denigrate some of our best citizens. Unless the Government reconsiders this matter, the situation might appear to get worse. Therefore, if the Government cares about the education system, it is going to work out with the union via the process of collective bargaining to try to find a solution, for I am sure that TTUTA is neither irresponsible nor unreasonable.

Yet, perhaps, there is need for a full-scale debate and consultation on the school system. It is incumbent to resolve the differences with teachers not with fax communications, as has been done by the Minister of Finance—

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order. The Member for Naparima is deliberately misleading the House. I have had no fax communications with TTUTA. I have met with TTUTA. I have met with their President, Mr. Permell and, as I said in my statement, on the last occasion when he had to meet with me, he never showed up although he said he was coming. I think that the Member for Naparima is out of place and he is deliberately misleading the House since I had no fax communications with TTUTA.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, could I take the opportunity to remind you what was the motion presented to the Speaker, to which leave has been granted you. The matter concerns the unhealthy state of the education system of Trinidad and Tobago as it impacts upon teachers, children, parents and the community. Could you stick within the confines of this motion.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is what I have done throughout.

I am going to wind up now but I will tell you, it would be an important initiative to move beyond elegant rhetoric of saying that our school system is the best in the Caribbean and to acknowledge that serious problems exist and let us

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start with restoring the confidence and morale of teachers for the sake of the education system, parents and the nation as a whole.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I request that the Member withdraw the statement that I had fax communications with TTUTA, unless he can demonstrate that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Could I invite the honourable Minister of Education for her contribution.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Gloria Henry): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must confess, I am a little confused about the manner in which the Member for Naparima proceeded because when I read the statement, I thought he was going to deal comprehensively with what he considers the education system. His motion reads:

“...the unhealthy state of the education system of Trinidad and Tobago as it impacts upon teachers, children, parents and the community. The matter is important because of the stress and difficulties being experienced by our teachers, children and parents throughout the country. The blatant indifference shown by Government in resolving the critical issues leaves much to be desired.

He dealt entirely with the problems that teachers are experiencing with respect to their salaries and just remuneration. The Minister of Finance has dealt with that comprehensively in his statement. I advise the Member for Naparima to go through that statement and understand the extent to which we have been dealing with the problem of teachers' remuneration. More than that, I think to describe the education system in Trinidad and Tobago as unhealthy, is unjust and incorrect. Although as in so many areas of national life, we have problems, I can safely say that the problems of the education system are being addressed in an organized and methodical manner and we are resolving some of the problems.

It is a fact when the Member spoke about schools being in a run-down and dilapidated condition and the consequence of this having a demoralizing effect on both teacher and pupil. We have acknowledged that many schools are in a decrepit condition but we are not sitting idly by and allowing the conditions to go worse. We are addressing this problem with a very vigorous school building and repair programme. We have already constructed 22 primary schools providing better accommodation for 16,000 students and their teachers and we have refurbished

and upgraded another 40 or so schools, thereby providing improved accommodation for teachers and children.

5.35 p.m.

In 1991 we expect to construct an added 23 schools, 18 under the IADB/Trinidad and Tobago Government Loan Agreement and five under the Ministry of Education's Development Programme. The last document in which we acknowledged the state of the school plant was in the 1991 budget. I assume that the Member has an acquaintance with this. We understand the urgency of the situation we inherited and we are operating with greater capability in order to maximize the resources that are available to us.

In addition to addressing the problems of the physical plant, we are engaged in programmes which will support teachers in their efforts to continue presenting quality education to the country. We have accepted that teachers have had to work under difficult physical conditions. We are attempting to improve those physical conditions but more than that, we are assisting teachers to tool themselves properly for the jobs that they have undertaken.

The Ministry of Education has in the past four years, focused on upgrading the skills of education practitioners in many ways. Programmes have been mounted for the training of principals, and would-be principals, as well as schools supervisors. We have done remedial programmes in reading for almost 7,000 primary school teachers as well as 245 secondary school teachers, on request. We have started a full programme for the secondary school teachers in remedial reading in this year.

We have also done remedial mathematics for over 3,000 primary school teachers, that is training in remedial mathematics. There have also been programmes mounted, within the last three years, for teachers of special children as we move in the direction of integrating special children in the school system. In that way, we are addressing the problems of the parents, children and the teachers. More children throughout the country have had the opportunity to attend pre-schools, through the expansion of a system which we are currently evaluating. The training of teachers in the expanded system of early childhood education is being actively supported by the Government. The total effect of the programme we have in place for upgrading the facilities, equipment and working conditions for pupils and teachers alike, is that we will benefit from an enhanced learning and teaching process.

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On the question of quality of education, we have significant achievements. Our system of education is in a very creditable state. If we take our pupils' performance at the CXC level and compare ourselves with the rest of the Caribbean, we will see that we are head and shoulders above the rest of the Caribbean. Over the last two years, students from Trinidad and Tobago have dominated the CXC awards. Of the 16 awards given in 1989 and 1990, Trinidad and Tobago won 11 of the highest awards and this includes the award for the best overall, student in 1988 and 1990.

A' level results are of such a high standard, as we can see by entry gained by students entering into the faculties of the University of the West Indies. At the level of the Common Entrance Examination, because of the tremendous amount of work that has been put in by the Reading Unit of the Curriculum Department of the Ministry of Education, we have witnessed a significant improvement in essay writing in this examination. That of course has an effect on the rest of the learning process, in that teachers have been parents with the Ministry of Education.

At the Common Entrance Examination, for your information, an acceptable standard of proficiency in English was achieved by 11 per cent of the students in 1987, by 22 per cent in 1988 and further improved by 44 per cent in 1989. I have not gotten the figures for 1990. That, of course, is because of the accelerated programme for remedial reading and so on, that has been going on consistently in the Ministry, in addition to, of course, the special programme that has been put on during 1990 as it was International Literacy Year.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: What about the failures?

Mrs. Henry: Do not interrupt me! In addition to the achievements at those levels within the system, let me read from the *Trinidad Guardian* of February 12, 1990—a column which you could have probably picked up on because it concerns education. The headline is “Carla Noel: Rhodes Scholarship Winner”—

“Her academic excellence began early.”

Much of it of course would be attributed to her parents but more than that—

“The Rhodes Scholarship is still the most prestigious scholarship to be won in Jamaica and the Commonwealth Caribbean.

The past three Rhodes Scholarship winners from the Commonwealth Caribbean have been Trinidadians. This is a feat, and statistically, Trinidad has consistently been dominating the feverishly sought-after award.”

Two previous immediate winners were both from Trinidad and Tobago. That is a tribute to the system which we operate [*Interruption*]. Can I have your protection Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order please! The hon. Minister is being disturbed. Could I ask for some order please.

Mrs. Henry: Our performance at all levels in the education system is a tribute to the quality of education that is being presented in Trinidad and Tobago and no person or group of persons can take credit for this. We in Trinidad and Tobago have a commitment to the system and over the last four years we have been attempting to boost the system by ensuring that teachers get training and retraining at all levels in many subject areas and that they are supported in other ways as well.

One of the ways in which we have provided support for the system is by putting in place the Learning Resource Center. That center is going to come in stream in September 1991. The building is now in the process of being completed. This Learning Resource Center will provide for in-service training for educational personnel, innovation and evaluation of curriculum at all levels, the production of educational materials, the distribution of educational materials, the establishment of a pedagogical information link and the operation of a model school library.

Already, 72 officers of the Ministry of Education were trained at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine—that includes teachers who are in schools—in the Master of Education and the Diploma in Education programme in order to staff the center as well as to improve the efficiency of personnel in the Ministry of Education. Apart from that, 1,650 primary school teachers have been retrained and 246 teachers have been trained in library studies. [*Interruption*]. You see, the Member did not really address the topic that he proposed, but I did.

In addition to that, another support system that we have put in place is a system of libraries. The Ministry understands the important role and function of libraries in the education system and, as such, we are in the process of developing libraries in all primary schools with a view to encouraging reading and to improve the resource base for both pupils and teachers. Towards this end, we have instituted a mobile library service in the educational district of Caroni. This service now provides library services in 11 schools and is to be expanded as the book complement of the service increases.

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The Ministry of Education has recently re-established a public library in Couva after an absence of 15 years. It has restarted with a complement of 4,000 books and there are already plans afoot to increase this volume in order to better serve the reading community. A public library is earmarked for Chaguanas in 1991 and plans are already well on the way to bring this into fruition. The Ministry of Education has also arranged to assist the community efforts in Mayaro in the provision of a community library there. In addition, there are libraries being planned for Maloney and other parts of the country.

5.45 p.m.

I think I have addressed fully the matter which the Member for Naparima has brought. It is unfortunate that he did not seem to understand the motion, at least he did not address it in any consistent way, I do not know if he was playing court jester or not.

In summary, highly organized and very successful remedial educational programmes have been provided by the Ministry of Education and a large number of teachers have been trained to deliver remediation in reading and mathematics.

The teaching of special children has also been incorporated into the education system. Supports are in place for the system by way of the Learning Resource Centre which is to be opened this year, and the planned expansion of the school library services.

The most efficient and economic school building programme has been undertaken. At this point it has provided 28 school buildings at a total cost of \$55 million. There are other buildings in the course of construction.

The performance of our students at the CXC and Cambridge A' level examinations continues to be an asset to the well-being of the system. In fact, in light of all that I have presented, the attempt to belittle the achievements of the Ministry of Education and to generate discontent on the part of the teachers and doubt and mistrust on the part of parents, is without merit and is totally irresponsible behaviour on the part of the Member for Naparima.

The Ministry of Education has a working relationship with teachers. We have done all that we have done for teachers with teachers and I would like the Member to discontinue his attempts to put a wedge between the Ministry of Education, the Minister of Education and the teaching fraternity, whom we know are committed to our children. Thank you.

Order of Business

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Oropouche sought and received the approval of the Chair to have a motion on the adjournment. He is called upon now to proceed.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the agreement of the Leader of Government Business, I decided to defer my motion on the adjournment to next week because of the deferral on the previous week of the Member for Naparima's motion.

Dr. Tewarie: No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not true, I made no such agreement. We did agree to the deferral of the two motions to this week.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was told on the last occasion that the motion by the Member for Naparima could not be heard last week because they wanted an early adjournment to attend carnival, therefore, the arrangement was that his motion would be deferred to this week and I would defer mine until next week. That was the arrangement.

Dr. Tewarie: I will not argue about it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The motion is deferred.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.50 p.m.